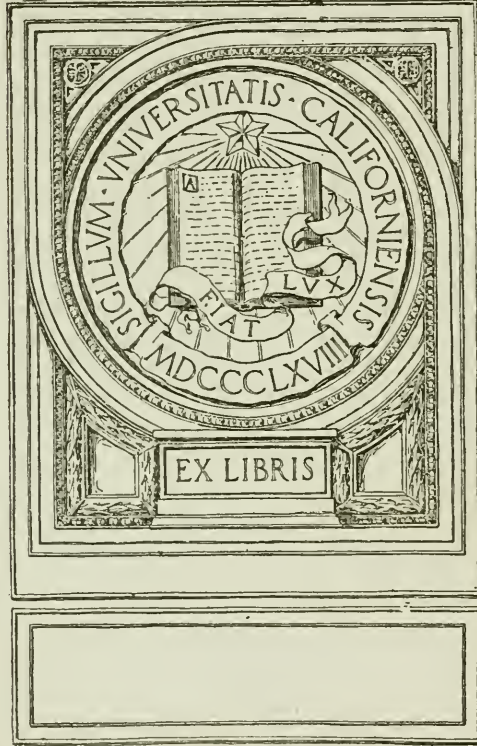




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LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

VOL. IV

FEBRUARY, 1918

No. 1

MADAME DE STAËL'S LITERARY  
REPUTATION IN ENGLAND

BY

ROBERT C. WHITFORD

Instructor in English

PRICE 75 CENTS

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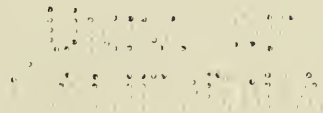
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MADAME DE STAËL'S LITERARY  
REPUTATION IN ENGLAND

BY

ROBERT C. WHITFORD



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
1918





## PREFACE

In writing an account of Madame de Staël's literary reputation in the England of her day, it has been necessary to restate many facts which have already been published by her biographers. But while her adventures in English society in 1813 and 1814 have been rather thoroughly discussed, I believe that nothing like a general survey of her literary reputation in Great Britain has been hitherto attempted. The biographies which give extended accounts of her year in England are those by Lady Blennerhassett and Prof. Abel Stevens. M. Pierre Kohler's *Madame de Staël et la Suisse* also contains a chapter upon her experiences in England. My most conspicuous predecessor in the small field of the present study is Miss Doris Gunnell, to whose extensive essay, "Madame de Staël en Angleterre"<sup>1</sup> (which, however, treats mainly of her one season as the lioness of London society), I owe much. I must mention also that about one-fifth of the material which appears in the following pages, including especially facts which suggest the weight of Sir James Mackintosh's friendship in determining Madame de Staël's social and literary success in England in 1813-1814, I published in the *South Atlantic Quarterly* for January, 1916.<sup>2</sup>

Although the initial impulse to this piece of investigation came from Prof. E. H. Wright of Columbia University, my especial debt of gratitude I owe to Prof. D. S. Blondheim, formerly of the University of Illinois and now of Johns Hopkins, who has given encouragement and assistance from suggesting sources of bibliography at the beginning of my study to reading proofs for me at the end. To the doctoral dissertation, *Madame de Staël's De l'Allemagne as a Cultural Power*, of Prof. Emma G. Jaeck of Oxford College, I am obliged for useful bibliographical information. I have benefited by extended discussion of the subject of this paper with Mr. C. A. Carroll of Cornell, and by suggestions from Professors T. E. Oliver and W. A. Oldfather of the University of Illinois, the latter of whom has seen it through the press. Prof. Stuart Sherman read the entire essay in manuscript and in proof, and his patient criticism has been invaluable.

ROBERT C. WHITFORD.

*New York City, July, 1917.*

<sup>1</sup> *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, 1913, Vol. XX, pp. 868-898.

<sup>2</sup> *An Essay in Friendship: Madame de Staël's English Triumph*, *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. XV, no. 1, pp. 41-51.



## MADAME DE STAËL'S LITERARY REPUTATION IN ENGLAND

Only a little more than one hundred years ago, a great lady of Paris won fame in England by praising Germany. A partial explanation of the paradox will, it is hoped, be afforded by this monograph. By the publication of her treatise *De l'Allemagne* in London in 1813, Madame de Staël achieved considerable repute as a literary critic and historian. Much of her reputation, however, was due to other causes. Madame de Staël the empress of conversation, Madame de Staël the brilliant creator of *Corinne*, Madame de Staël the proscribed enemy of Napoleon, Madame de Staël the political theorist, even Madame de Staël the lady of many loves, all this attractive retinue clustered around Madame de Staël the sympathetic interpreter of romanticism, and shared her honors. One must realize also that in the case of the daughter of Necker even more than in that of almost any other writer of the great second class general fame depended upon individual friendships. In England at least, she would have been almost nothing without her intimate acquaintances. Hence presentation of facts concerning the most significant of her literary friendships in England occupies no small proportion of the following pages. A complementary attempt is made to trace the progress of her literary reputation as it is shadowed forth in British periodicals of her time. The purpose is to offer a conveniently organized mass of evidence to the student of the interchange of literary influences between Madame de Staël and British authors. Here is no endeavor at supporting an hypothesis; facts, generally well attested, are simply presented in a roughly chronological sequence. Yet it does seem plain, that Madame de Staël's fame in England while she lived was due but slightly to the testimony of unprejudiced readers of *De l'Allemagne*.

Although a few of her most striking *bons mots* concerning British authors or their work are to be mentioned at their place in the order of events, it seems inadvisable to attempt at this time any detailed account of her own reaction to English stimuli. Brief indication of her opinion of Britain in general, and especially of British literature, may, however, enable the casual reader to comprehend from a new point of view the importance of her gradually growing fame in England. Joseph Texte declared that the abduction of Richardson's *Clarissa* was the greatest event of Anne Louise Germaine Necker's early life.<sup>1</sup> Certainly she grew up with admiration for the social and political organization of the kingdom of Great Britain and with a fairly intelligent veneration for its literature. In her *Essay on Fictions*, she praises *Clarissa*, *Tom Jones*, and Godwin's *Caleb Williams*.<sup>2</sup> In her essay *De la Littérature* (1800), she refers to Ossian as the source and parent of the "literature of the

<sup>1</sup> Texte, Joseph, *Jean Jacques Rousseau and the Cosmopolitan Spirit in Literature*, translated by J. W. Matthews, (London, 1899), p. 253. Cf. Sorel, *Mme. de Staël*, (Paris, 1890), p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *The Influence of Literature upon Society translated from the French of Madame de Staël-Holstein, to which is prefixed a Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Author*, (Boston, 1813), I, 11.

North," romantic literature, yet extols the immediate genius of Shakespeare.<sup>3</sup> She finds in Swift a sort of natural gaiety which involves moroseness.<sup>4</sup> She considers Pope's works models of grace and eloquence and declares, if her translator is to be trusted, that "nothing in the world can be more tedious than Spencer's [sic] 'Fairy Queen.'" <sup>5</sup> We are told by her most trustworthy biographer that, along with some passages of Chateaubriand, "la scène de l'enterrement dans l'Antiquaire, et les premiers poèmes de Lord Byron, lui ont causé des émotions inexprimables, et ont pour un temps renouvelé son existence."<sup>6</sup> One other passage may well be quoted, not so much for its suggestion of Madame de Staël's familiarity with English literature as for its hint of a little suspected phase of her generally gregarious personality:

"Elle citoit souvent l'exemple de Horn-Tooke, qui dans un âge très-avancé, disoit à lord Erskine: Si vous aviez obtenu pour moi dix ans de vie au fond d'un cachot, avec des plumes et des livres, je vous aurois remercié."<sup>7</sup>

Presenting no inferences concerning literary influences in the transmission of which Madame de Staël may have been the mediator between England and the Continent, the present study omits also all discussion of Madame de Staël as a power in politics and a light in society. Thus strictly limited, a chronological account of Madame de Staël's literary reputation in England can, without violent rupture of the chain of events, be separated into six main divisions. Before the publication of *Delphine* in 1803, Madame de Staël's English fame was chiefly notoriety. Between *Delphine* and the time of Madame de Staël's one really important visit to England there was a period of change and preparation during which *Corinne* (1807) served as an antidote for the earlier and less conventional novel. The new friendships which Madame de Staël made in England in the summer of 1813, together with old acquaintances renewed, will stand in a section by themselves. Preparations for the publication of *De l'Allemagne* will be detailed in the next section, which will be followed by an account of the reception of the *Germany*, and in a separate group by some details of the decline in Madame de Staël's English reputation up to the year of her death. The final division of the essay will tell of the temporary revival of Madame de Staël's British fame immediately after her death.

<sup>3</sup> The same, I, 241 ff.

<sup>4</sup> The same, I, 279-280.

<sup>5</sup> The same, I, 285.

<sup>6</sup> Madame Necker de Saussure, *Notice sur le caractère et les écrits de Madame de Staël*, (Paris, 1826), p. cccxxx.

<sup>7</sup> The same, p. ccclix.

The first great man of English letters who knew Madame de Staël was Edward Gibbon. In the middle of the eighteenth century, Gibbon was engaged to marry Suzanne Curchod. In 1766, Suzanne Curchod, now the wife of M. Necker, the great financier of Geneva, gave birth to a daughter, Anne Louise Germaine Necker, afterwards Baronne de Staël-Holstein. Gibbon preserved his friendship with the object of his early love, and he was several times a guest in her household. In 1784, on the occasion of one of his visits to Geneva, the historian wrote to a friend in England this description of the future writer of *De l'Allemagne*:

"Mlle. Necker, one of the greatest heiresses in Europe, is now about eighteen, wild, vain, but good-natured, and with a much larger provision of wit than of beauty."<sup>8</sup>

In the same year, Miss Mary Berry, the Bluestocking, met Mlle. Necker and was displeased by her boldness of manner. Thus unfavorably began the desultory intercourse which was to be recorded in the little manuscript book of "Notes of my acquaintance with Madame de Staël."<sup>9</sup>

Twice the problems of matrimony brought Mlle. Necker close to England. In the first place, she thought that, to keep Gibbon in the family, it might be well for her to marry him. At the tender age of ten, therefore, she suggested the match to her mother.<sup>10</sup> Ten years later, Pitt was a rival of De Staël for the hand of Anne.<sup>11</sup>

By the time of her marriage, Madame de Staël was beginning to be known in England. The notice of her *Letters on the Works and Character of J. J. Rousseau* which appeared in the *Critical Review* for August, 1789, marks the beginning of a long chain of articles concerning her in British periodicals. In this instance, there is very little critical comment about the lady, but a good deal about Rousseau. We are told the obvious, that "the baroness seems to admire Rousseau." And the critic concludes his article with a specimen of her style, "which is in general so animated and pleasing as to make her work very entertaining."<sup>12</sup> The fact that the little book had been translated into English indicates that its author already had some fame in the British Isles.

Madame de Staël and Miss Berry met again in 1791.<sup>13</sup> One noble critic asserts that Madame de Staël thought Miss Berry by far the cleverest woman in England.<sup>14</sup> It must have been at this period that she held that opinion,

<sup>8</sup> Gibbon, *The Miscellaneous Works*, ed. Lord Sheffield, (London, 1814), II, 367.

<sup>9</sup> *Extracts of the Journals and Correspondence of Miss Berry from the year 1783 to 1852*, ed. Lady Theresa Lewis, I, 134.

<sup>10</sup> Necker de Saussure, p. xxiii.

<sup>11</sup> Stevens, Abel, *Madame de Staël, A Study of her Life and Times, the First Revolution and the First Empire*, (New York, 1881), I, 88.

<sup>12</sup> *Critical Review*, LXVIII, pp. 129-132.

<sup>13</sup> *Extracts of the Journals of Miss Berry*, I, 362.

<sup>14</sup> Lord Houghton, *Monographs Personal and Social*, (London, 1873), V. The Berrys, p. 190.

for in the posthumous *Considerations on the French Revolution*, where Madame de Staël recorded the results of her observations in England during 1813 and 1814, Miss Berry is not classed among the notable ladies of Great Britain. Miss Berry found much to dislike about the baroness, and no doubt took much gossip about her back across the Channel. Certainly the ambassadress' reputation for loving unwisely had preceded her when, two years later, she went to England.

Already, in 1791, Madame de Staël was a fervent admirer of England. In the following year she began to cherish the hope of a visit to that land of good government. Gibbon visited the Necker family twice that year, spending the month of March and several weeks of the autumn at Coppet, and both times he wrote enthusiastic letters to friends in England. Of the baroness he writes in April:

"But what can the poor creature do? her husband is in Sweden, her lover is no longer secretary at war, and her father's house is the only place where she can reside with the least degree of prudence and decency."<sup>15</sup>

Such casual remarks would not tend to make Madame de Staël popular in English society. The only mention of her that I find in an English periodical during 1792 would add as little to her literary prestige. A writer for the *Analytical Review*, in reviewing Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, says:

"Of Mrs. Piozzi, our author remarks, that she often repeated by rote what she did not understand—the baroness of Staël has the same veneration for person, with the same neglect towards the mind."<sup>16</sup>

On November 25, Gibbon wrote:

"Madame de Staël has produced a second son. She talks wildly enough of visiting England this winter. She is a pleasant little woman."<sup>17</sup>

Madame de Staël did go to England, and she stayed in England five months. This first visit was of little literary importance, for she lived quietly in a country house, Juniper Hall, near Mickleham in Surrey, with a group of French émigrés for her constant companions. She did, however, meet Fanny Burney, the author of *Evelina*. Indeed the two women were rapidly becoming friends when Dr. Burney interfered in the name of propriety and put a stop to the growing intimacy between his daughter, the protégée of Dr. Johnson, and the French lady whose romantic reputation was already putting her outside the lines of English conventionality.<sup>18</sup> In the letter which called forth her father's warning, Miss Burney wrote:

"She is a woman of the first abilities, I think, I have ever seen; she is more in the style of Mrs. Thrale than of any other celebrated character, but

<sup>15</sup> Gibbon, *Miscellaneous Works*, (London, 1814), I, 345.

<sup>16</sup> *The Analytical Review, or History of Literature Domestic and Foreign*, Vol. XIII, May-Aug., 1792, (London, 1792), Appendix to the Thirteenth Volume, p. 483.

<sup>17</sup> Gibbon, I, 383.

<sup>18</sup> *Diary and Letters of Madame d'Arblay*, ed. Charlotte Barrett, (London, 1898), III, 489.

she has infinitely more depth, and seems an even profound politician and metaphysician. She has suffered us to hear some of her works in MS., which are truly wonderful, for powers both of thinking and expression."<sup>19</sup>

Madame de Staël wrote her first English in a note to Miss Burney, drawing as she did so a complimentary comparison between that fact and the fact that the first English she read was Milton's.<sup>20</sup> In another note, Madame de Staël, in the flattering fashion which she affected in her intercourse with English literary people, called Miss Burney, point blank, "la première femme d'Angleterre."<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, Miss Burney's sense of decorum overcame the charm of Madame de Staël's personality, and their friendship ceased abruptly.

That Madame de Staël's literary work was known not unfavorably in England in the early 90's Dr. Burney testifies in his letter to Fanny; he admits that Madame de Staël may well be intellectually worthy of Fanny's friendship. "I am not at all surprised," he writes, "at your account of the captivating powers of Madame de Staël. It corresponds with all that I had heard about her, and with the opinion I had formed of her intellectual and literary powers in reading her charming little '*Apologie de Rousseau.*' But as nothing human is allowed to be perfect, she has not escaped censure. Her house was the centre of revolutionists previous to the 10th of August, after her father's departure, and she has been accused of partiality to M. de N—. But perhaps all may be Jacobinical malignity."<sup>22</sup>

In the records of the activities of the little French colony near Mickleham one finds the first English reference to one of Madame de Staël's more important works, the *Treatise of the Influence of the Passions upon the Happiness of Individuals and of Nations*. "Madame de Staël read us the opening of her work '*Sur le Bonheur*'; it seems to me admirable," writes Miss Burney to her father, February 29, 1793.<sup>23</sup> In May, M. D'Arblay, we learn, gave every moment of his time to transcribing "a MS. work of Madame de Staël on '*L'Influence des Passions.*'" "It is a work of considerable length," writes Mrs. Phillips to Miss Burney, "and written in a hand the most difficult possible to decipher."<sup>24</sup>

One English notice of Madame de Staël intervenes between her visit to England and the publication of her essay on the passions. In 1795, the *Gentleman's Magazine* published a brief comment upon her *Réflexions sur la paix, adressés à M. Pitt & aux Français*, which had been published in Geneva in the previous year. The news of the author's short stay in England had left no startling impression upon the mind of the reviewer. For him the

<sup>19</sup> The same, III, 484.

<sup>20</sup> The same, III, 482.

<sup>21</sup> *Diary* of Madame d'Arblay, III, 483.

<sup>22</sup> The same, p. 489. The reference is to the Count de Narbonne, who was one of the company at Juniper Hall.

<sup>23</sup> The same, III, 501.

<sup>24</sup> *Diary* of Madame d'Arblay, III, 501.

writer of the "extraordinary pamphlet" is the "acute and eloquent daughter of M. Neckar," nothing more. His most striking comment is that through all her prejudices and errors her ideas of France are just.<sup>25</sup>

In the next year, Madame de Staël published at Lausanne her book *De l'Influence des passions*. This work appeared in English in 1798. Three English reviews of this treatise were published in prominent magazines, one by William Taylor of Norwich<sup>26</sup> in the *Monthly Review*, another a brief notice in the *Critical Review*, and the third a respectable article in the *British Critic*. The last periodical presented to its readers a summary of Madame de Staël's book in June, 1798,<sup>27</sup> and a little later in the year offered a more critical discussion by way of review of the translation. This sentence gives a fair notion of the critic's attitude toward his subject:

"To all who have traced, with any degree of accuracy, the events of the French revolution, the name of the Baroness Staël must be well known; by few, excepting the favourers of revolutionary doctrines, can it be much respected."<sup>28</sup>

The reviewer evidently considers the book before him the work of a fanatic, the "infatuated panegyrist" of the French Revolution. Yet he admires the chapter on love, and grudgingly admits that with due caution this "celebrated work" may be perused with advantage as well as pleasure.<sup>28</sup>

The *Critical* reviewer grants that the "ingenious baroness treats the subject methodically." But he concludes by saying: "It would be illiberal to pronounce this work destitute of merit; but the observations are sometimes ill-founded and the style is harsh and inelegant."<sup>29</sup> William Taylor of Norwich, on the other hand, praises Madame de Staël's treatise immoderately. He speaks of her as "worthy from her talents to counsel mankind and formed by the graces to influence their conduct"; he forgets her heavy features and chunky figure. He remarks in general: "The whole is written with a smooth propriety often bordering on elegance, but never aspiring to eloquence; yet it is sufficiently enriched with new, sensible, and valuable reflections and observations."<sup>30</sup>

The next mention of Madame de Staël in a British periodical was of a somewhat unusual nature yet not likely to increase the circulation of her works. Among the poems in the *Anti-Jacobin* was one presumably by Canning called *New Morality*. There radical principles and democratic excesses of all sorts were held up to ridicule, and in no inconspicuous place in the pillory Madame de Staël stands smiling:

<sup>25</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 65, part 2, p. 937.

<sup>26</sup> Robberds, J. W., *A Memoir of the Life and Writings of the late William Taylor of Norwich*, (London, 1843), I, 168.

<sup>27</sup> *The British Critic, a New Review*, XI, 457.

<sup>28</sup> *The British Critic*, XII, 649-654.

<sup>29</sup> *Critical Review*, Appendix to 19th volume, pp. 506-507.

<sup>30</sup> *Monthly Review*, ser. 2, vol. 22, Appendix, Foreign Literature, pp. 582-584.



“And ah! what verse can grace thy stately mien,  
 Guide of the World, Preferment's Golden Queen,  
 NECKAR's fair Daughter,—STAEL the Epicene!  
 Bright o'er whose flaming cheek and pumple nose  
 The bloom of young Desire unceasing glows!”<sup>31</sup>

Twice more in the eighteenth century Madame de Staël's name graced an English periodical. In the *Critical Review* for July, 1799, was brief mention of a “fair translation” of the Treatise on the Passions.<sup>32</sup> But the critic was satisfied this time to refer his readers to the unfavorable review of 1797.<sup>33</sup> A more important review appeared in the *British Critic's* Foreign Catalogue in December, 1800. Article 45 is a five page critique of the treatise *De la Littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales*. The reviewer devotes most of his space to discussing the theory of perfectibility which is backed by historical fact in this “new production of a pen already known by other approved works.”<sup>34</sup>

In the six years following the publication of the treatise on the Passions, Madame de Staël devoted her serious efforts to politics and her lighter feelings to her earnest lovers, of whom her husband was probably not one. In 1802, however, her husband was seized with a grave illness and was nursed tenderly by the baroness until, as the *Gentleman's Magazine* recorded, “he expired in the arms of his wife, the celebrated daughter of M. Neckar.”<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *The Anti-Jacobin, or Weekly Examiner*, Fourth Edition, (London, 1799), II, 633-634, *New Morality*.

<sup>32</sup> *Critical Review*, vol. 26, (July, 1799), p. 359.

<sup>33</sup> See preceding page.

<sup>34</sup> *British Critic*, vol. 16, (July-December, 1800), pp. 695-700.

<sup>35</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 72, pt. 2, (August, 1802), p. 786.

In the year of her husband's death, Madame de Staël was hard at work upon her first notable novel, *Delphine*. An exceedingly sentimental book somewhat conventional in plot, *Delphine* met with very little favor in England. It seemed to English readers to furnish corroborative evidence for the popular estimate of Madame de Staël as a clever advocate of revolutionary doctrines and free love. The Reverend Sydney Smith attacked the book with vigor. His review of the English version appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* for April, 1803. The opening sentence is famous: "This dismal trash, which has so nearly dislocated the jaws of every critic among us with gaping, has so alarmed Bonaparte that he has seized the whole impression, sent Madame de Staël out of Paris, and, for aught we know, sleeps in a nightcap of steel and dagger-proof blankets." A page farther on we find this opinion: "Making every allowance for reading this book in a translation, and in a very bad translation, we cannot but deem it a heavy performance." The incidents, says Sydney Smith, are vulgar. All but two of the characters are vulgar. The plot is not cleverly constructed. The book ends two volumes too late. In conclusion, the reverend gentleman stated as his general opinion of *Delphine*, that it was "calculated to shed a mild lustre over adultery," and added the parting shot, that the book's "badness of principles is alone corrected by the badness of style."<sup>36</sup>

The *Critical Review* published an extensive account of *Delphine* in the following month, May, 1803. "This is one of the most fascinating novels we have lately met with; and we are sorry, on this very account, that it has been translated into our language—for we abominate both its religion and its morals." The writer points out the purpose of *Delphine*, to prove that while a man ought to be capable of braving the opinion of the world, a woman must submit to it, and notices that the story is told by means of letters after the example of Richardson and Rousseau. The plot, the reviewer outlines to the extent of six or seven pages, and he brings his essay to an end with the remark that in the termination of *Delphine* there is nothing either of dramatic dignity or of dramatic justice.<sup>37</sup>

Although frowned upon by the moral critics, *Delphine* apparently circulated rather widely in England. By way of counteracting the novel's immoral influence, a Miss M. Byron published an *Anti-Delphine* in London in 1806.<sup>38</sup> Mr. D. Boileau, in the inaccurate biographical sketch prefixed to his translation of the essay on Literature, gives this interesting statement concerning Madame de Staël's Rousseauistic novel: "It had four or five editions in France, and has been translated in English and German, while the *Anti-Delphine* of a very sensible English young lady, which has drawn sweet

<sup>36</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, vol. 2, (April, 1803), pp. 172-177.

<sup>37</sup> *Critical Review*, vol. 38, (May, 1803), pp. 48-58.

<sup>38</sup> Thieme, Hugo P., *Guide bibliographique de la littérature française de 1800 à 1906*, (Paris, 1907), p. 391.

tears from the eyes of tender females, has met with few readers in England, where Madame de Staël's novel has been loudly condemned."<sup>39</sup>

On the whole, *Delphine* was far from bringing to its author the admiration of the English reading public. But in the year of its publication, she offset the ill effects by earning the gratitude of one influential Englishman, Sir James Mackintosh. She translated into her native tongue his speech in defence of an émigré, M. Peltier. Thenceforth Madame de Staël and Sir James Mackintosh were staunch literary allies.<sup>40</sup>

In January of 1804, she met at Weimar another notable Englishman, Henry Crabb Robinson. Soon after the publication of *Delphine*, Madame de Staël, exiled from Paris, had set out on a tour of Germany. She began during this journey to gather facts and impressions which later she set down in her great book, and it was because of Robinson's knowledge of German literature and philosophy that she was anxious to make his acquaintance. He recorded in his reminiscences that he met "a lady who then enjoyed a European reputation, and who will have a lasting place in the history of French literature." Comparative Literature was almost undreamt of, except by Madame de Staël, in those days. "She longs for a philosophical conversation with you," Böttiger, the archaeologist, who was rector of the gymnasium at Weimar, wrote to Crabb Robinson in his note of introduction. In telling of his first meeting with Madame de Staël, the Englishman presents an attractive description, the first since Gibbon's, of the lady's "bright black eyes."<sup>41</sup> "At this early time," remarks Robinson, "Madame de Staël did not affect to conceal her preference for the society of men to that of her own sex."<sup>42</sup> He mentions his services to the Frenchwoman in helping her "to obtain a knowledge of the best German authors," and notes that even then, long before her acquaintance with A. W. Schlegel, she looked upon the English mind as a medium between the German and the French. With his characteristic acuteness, Crabb Robinson found fault with Madame de Staël's attitude toward German literature, especially her failure to appreciate Goethe and her romantic miscomprehension of Immanuel Kant.<sup>43</sup> Oddly enough, he calls her "incapable of feeling a joke." He adds, "I believe I owe the favour I experienced from her to my perfect frankness and even freedom.—Yet she had pleasure in being complimented, and took it as a sort of right—like a quitrent, not requiring thanks, but a receipt."<sup>44</sup> All these snatches of opinion would be of little importance

<sup>39</sup> *The Influence of Literature upon Society translated from the French of Madame de Staël-Holstein, to which is prefixed a Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Author.* From the second London edition, (Boston, 1813), I, 19.

<sup>40</sup> *Memoirs of the Life of the Right Honourable Sir James Mackintosh*, ed. R. J. Mackintosh, (London, 1835), I, 182, Note.

<sup>41</sup> Robinson, Henry Crabb, *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence*, ed. Thomas Sadler, (London, 1869), I, 173-174.

<sup>42</sup> The same, I, 175.

<sup>43</sup> Crabb Robinson, I, 177.

<sup>44</sup> The same, I, 178.

for the present essay were it not for the fact that Henry Crabb Robinson's impressions were somewhat influential in moulding the general English opinion of Madame de Staël in 1813.

The name of the daughter of Necker appeared in the *Critical Review* again in May, 1804, but in a way not calculated to augment her favor with English readers of the best sort. In the Monthly Catalogue is unfavorable mention of an historical romance, *Margaret of Strafford*, attributed to "Madame Staël, author of *Delphine*, etc." She is rated as one of the unsuccessful authors of historical novels, and we are told that her immorality is as likely to injure as her ignorance to mislead the inexperienced reader, because there is in *Margaret* "scarcely any page in which virtue is encouraged." This romance, if Madame de Staël wrote it, the editors of her complete works judiciously discarded.<sup>45</sup>

During the year 1804, Madame de Staël was busied with editing the papers of her father, preparing for publication her memorial of him, the volume called *Manuscrits de M. Necker*. A short notice of this book, which was published in Geneva, 1804, appeared in 1805 in the Appendix to the 47th volume of the *Monthly Review*. The daughter's "superfluous and repeated panegyrics" of her father are frowned upon, but her "beautiful apostrophe" and the "enthusiasm" of her remarks are praised. Apparently the lady's style was, at least in the opinion of English critics, improving.<sup>46</sup>

*Corinne*, Madame de Staël's best novel, was written during the years 1805 and 1806. It was published in 1807 and immediately translated into English. Two long reviews of the book made their appearance in October of that year, one in the *Edinburgh*, of the French version, the other in the *Monthly Review*, of the English *Corinna*. Both reviewers were in general favorable in their criticism, although both found faults in the constructive technique of the story.

The review of *Corinne* in the *Edinburgh* begins very kindly with a paragraph of general praise.<sup>47</sup> The plan is very different from that of an ordinary novel, the critic declares. The narrative is as lively and affecting as the descriptions are picturesque and beautiful. At another place, the reader learns that the observations which Madame de Staël puts in the mouth of her accomplished heroine are those of a person of taste and sentiment. Madame de Staël, the reviewer asserts, has studied with great care the character and manners of the English. He does, however, point out some exaggeration and harshness in the delineation of the typical English character of Lord Nelvil. The baroness, in the reviewer's opinion, ascribes too much to physical causes in the moulding of character. He finds faults in her analysis of feeling. But, says this astonishing *Edinburgh Reviewer*, "the blemishes are inconsiderable compared with the general execution of the work, with the imagination, the feeling, the eloquence displayed in it."

<sup>45</sup> *Critical Review*, ser. 3, vol. 2, (May, 1804), p. 115.

<sup>46</sup> *Monthly Review*, ser. 2, vol. 47, pp. 468-478.

<sup>47</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, vol. 11, (October, 1807), pp. 183-194.

Although one might suspect Madame de Staël's good friend Sir James Mackintosh of writing this extremely kind review of her novel, records show that the critic really was the Reverend Mr. J. A. Playfair,<sup>48</sup> and that Mackintosh, who was at that time a judge in Bombay, did not even read the book until June of 1808. In his comments upon *Corinne* in his journal, Mackintosh shrewdly remarks that in the character of Corinne the author drew an imaginary self, "what she is, what she had the power of being, and what she can easily imagine that she might have become." He agrees in the main with the opinions of the *Edinburgh's* critic. On June 18, he made this entry: "Fourth and fifth volumes of *Corinne*. Farewell, Corinne! powerful and extraordinary book; full of faults so obvious as not to be worth enumerating; but of which a single sentence has excited more feelings and exercised more reason than the most faultless models of elegance." Like a true critic, the judge proceeds to enumerate the faults of *Corinne*, calling the romance a "slight vehicle of idea and sentiment." "The grand defect is the want of repose—too much and too ingenious reflection—too uniform an ardour of feeling. The understanding is fatigued; the heart ceases to feel."<sup>49</sup>

Of the seven pages of the *Monthly Review's* account of *Corinne*, four or five are filled with selections from the book. The rest are filled with faint praise of a "poorly constructed love story" which has "considerable merit, though in some respects its defects are not inferior to its elegances." "The delineation of Corinna is in many points original, and the idea of blending Love and Literature is not common; yet the effect will not be generally pleasing." And yet the reviewer himself seems to have liked the story. In conclusion he makes this significant remark: "We often recognize in the observations of Madame de Staël a profundity of reflection combined with an acquaintance with the arts that is not very usual among women."<sup>50</sup>

As Mackintosh had found Madame de Staël's stylistic weakness, the critic of the *Monthly Review* had hit upon the soul of the lady's greatness. Yet a few years more and she was to leap to prominence as a critical historian of literature. In these very years in fact, while *Corinne* was bringing her fame, Madame de Staël determined to write a great work on Germany and with the purpose of collecting material made a second extended visit to that country. This time she met August Wilhelm Schlegel, who became tutor of her children and literary adviser to the great lady herself. To him it is that uncharitable theorists attribute most of the significant critical judgments in her epoch-making book.

Meanwhile *Corinne* gradually became popular in England. It seems to have blotted out the evil record of *Delphine* and left the readers in England with open minds, ready to make a just estimate of the lady of Coppet and her

<sup>48</sup> Copinger, W. A., *On the Authorship of the first hundred numbers of the Edinburgh Review* (Manchester, 1895): "No. XXI, October, 1807—Art. XII—Rev. J. A. Playfair."

<sup>49</sup> *Memoirs of Sir James Mackintosh*, I, 405-407.

<sup>50</sup> *Monthly Review*, ser. 2, vol. 54, (October, 1807), pp. 152-159.

work. But even in *Corinne* the French sentimentality was too much for English readers of the conservative sort. A young lady recommended the book to Thomas Moore, the Irish poet, in 1807. "You will hate the heroine," she says. "And, note, I don't love Corinna myself, but I was interested in the book, for I like a fine, exaggerated, extravagant passion that breaks one's heart, such as one never sees in the natural course of human affairs."<sup>51</sup> A letter written by Sir James Mackintosh to Mrs. John Taylor at Norwich from Bombay in October, 1808, shows how *Corinne* was improving Madame de Staël's literary reputation in England:

"You will see in the wonderful 'Corinne' how the reaction drives French men of letters to a poetical religion; and Mr. Taylor will tell you, that in Germany there are many symptoms of a mystical philosophy."<sup>52</sup>

Maria Edgeworth, as one should hardly expect, was much pleased with the novel of Italy. She read it with her father and, as she remarked in a letter written in 1808, was dazzled by the genius, provoked by the absurdities, and lost in admiration of the taste and critical judgment of Italian literature displayed throughout the work. "I almost broke my foolish heart over the end of the third volume, and my father acknowledges he never read anything more pathetic."<sup>53</sup>

In April, 1809, Madame de Staël's name appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* again, this time in a notice of her edition of the *Lettres et pensées du Maréchal Prince de Ligne*.<sup>54</sup> There is little of note in the critique, although we may see a straw indicating the direction of the breeze of favor in the allusion to Madame de Staël as "an acute observer certainly of characters and a penetrating judge of talents." The work was not of a sort to go through many editions. Indeed the only contemporary English remark concerning it that has come under my eyes is that of Sir James Mackintosh, who notes in his journal: "Read the preface of Madame de Staël to the 'Pensées, &c.' of Prince de Ligne, of which Sydenham complained as fatiguingly brilliant."<sup>55</sup>

In the following year began what Mr. Oliver Elton has called Jeffrey's "blind dealings" with Madame de Staël. In an essay concerning two volumes of letters of eighteenth century ladies of the French court, he reckons among the female correspondents of one of these ladies "Madame de Staël, so well known to most of our readers by her charming Memoirs."<sup>56</sup> He had fallen into the mistake of confusing Louise Germaine Necker, Baronne de

<sup>51</sup> Moore, Thomas, *Memoirs, Journals and Correspondence*, ed. Lord John Russell, I, 234.

<sup>52</sup> *Life of Sir James Mackintosh*, I, 440.

<sup>53</sup> Hill, Constance, *Miss Edgeworth and her Circle in the Days of Buonaparte and Bourbon*, (London and New York, 1910), p. 125.

<sup>54</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, vol. 14, (April, 1809), p. 107.

<sup>55</sup> *Memoirs of Mackintosh*, II, 33.

<sup>56</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, (January, 1810); also Jeffrey, F., *Contributions to the Edinburgh Review*, I, 241.

Staël-Holstein, with a Madame de Staal who lived a century earlier and wrote several series of memoirs.<sup>57</sup>

At the end of the last century, while she still lived unmolested in Paris, Madame de Staël had written and published a treatise on "Literature Considered in its Relations to Social Institutions." Now that she was gaining popularity in England and was beginning to contemplate a visit to that country, English publishers set about translating and republishing this early essay. To at least one of these editions was prefixed a rather inaccurate biographical introduction by D. Boileau. Even in America she had a public, as the authenticated edition published in Boston shows.<sup>58</sup> In England the *De la Littérature* was reviewed twice at this time, in the *Monthly Review* in the summer of 1812 and by Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh* early in 1813.

The writer in the *Monthly Review* comments upon Madame de Staël's endeavor to support her metaphysical theory of perfectibility by evidence drawn from the history of literature. Her veneration of Ossian he finds particularly obnoxious. She is, he declares, "carrying her reasoning beyond the bounds of reason" when she attempts to account for every trifling distinction in the literature of each country, "and traces it genealogically from foundations that do not exist." The concluding portion of the book he considers merely a dream. But the reviewer has praise as well as blame for Madame de Staël. He asserts that her taste in matters strictly literary is unerring. The defect in the general design of the book on Literature is compensated for, he thinks, by the extraordinary energy and brilliancy of detached passages. He says that the production is remarkable for the closeness with which fault and excellence are drawn together, and that the author "never shines so little as when she draws from her acquirements, nor so much as when she yields herself implicitly to her heart."<sup>59</sup>

Jeffrey's review of *De la littérature* in the *Edinburgh* for February, 1813, marked the beginning of Madame de Staël's year of triumph in England. In the first forty-eight pages of the magazine, the critic presents Madame de Staël to his readers as a woman well worth knowing. He calls the book on Literature the best thing she has yet written, though other works of hers seem to him to have been of more practical utility, and he gives a thorough outline of that part which deals with the literature of England. Madame de Staël's hypothesis of perfectibility, which she held in common with many social theorists of her time, Jeffrey condemns, but her other theory, of the influence of climate upon the growth of national genius, he does not disagree with so roundly. The closing pages of the essay he devotes to remarks concerning her opinions of English poets, novelists, and philosophers, remarks suited if not intended to rouse the reader's curiosity.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> This common error is explained in *Notes and Queries*, 2d series, I, 120.

<sup>58</sup> See note 39 preceding.

<sup>59</sup> *Monthly Review*, ser. 2, vol. 68, (May-August, 1812), Art. I in Appendix, pp. 449-459.

<sup>60</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, (February, 1813), pp. 1-48.

"Je me flatte d'être à Londres vers la fin du mois de mai," wrote Madame de Staël to Thomas Campbell in January, 1813.<sup>61</sup> Campbell no doubt phrased the general impression concerning her advent when he wrote, "Madame de Staël is coming to England; she will see us at Sydenham, and we shall patronize her for the sake of Corinne."<sup>62</sup> Certainly she met with an enthusiastic reception when, early in June, she finally did land on British soil.

One reason for the welcome she received may be found in the political situation of Europe. She represented the side of England and England's allies against Napoleon. Her active opposition to the Emperor extended to the publication, in March, 1813, of an *Appeal to the Nations of Europe against the Continental System*. This pamphlet was published first at Stockholm at the suggestion of Bernadotte; but it was speedily translated and produced in English both at London and at Boston, Massachusetts. A paragraph from the preface to the American edition will give some notion of the effect which the circulation of this tract had upon her literary fame among English readers:

"*Madame de Stael*, by the authority of *Bernadotte* has attempted to animate the friends of liberty, and of national rights in their fateful struggle. No one is better qualified to accomplish this purpose. She has watched the calamities of revolutionary and Imperial France, and has deplored the degradation of Europe with the philosophy of the other sex, and the sensibility of her own."<sup>63</sup>

By the time she actually reached England, then, Madame de Staël stood well in popular estimation; *Delphine* was forgotten, *Corinne* was pleasantly remembered, and her political prestige helped to make her popular among men and women of letters.

<sup>61</sup> Beattie, William, *Life and Letters of Thomas Campbell*, 2d ed., (London, 1850), II, 222.

<sup>62</sup> The same.

<sup>63</sup> *An Appeal to the Nations of Europe against the Continental System: published at Stockholm, by the authority of Bernadotte, in March 1813. By Madame de Staël-Holstein.* (London: Published by J. M. Richardson, Cornhill. Boston: Republished by Samuel H. Parker, 1813).



### III

“On my arrival in England, no particular person was present to my thoughts; I knew scarcely any one in that country; but I went there with confidence.”<sup>64</sup> So wrote Madame de Staël in her own account of her English sojourn. Her confidence was not unreasonable, even though Sir James Mackintosh had not yet returned from Bombay. She seems to have jumped into instant popularity. Lady Blennerhasset declares that “on June 22d, the day after her arrival in London, Madame de Staël met Sheridan, Whitbread, Grattan, Byron, and the Marquis of Lansdowne at a reception.”<sup>65</sup> Another biographer, Mrs. Child, presents this striking evidence of Madame de Staël’s vogue with members of London society:

“In the immense crowds that collected to see her at the Marquis of Lansdowne’s, and in the houses of the other principal nobility of London, the eagerness of curiosity broke through all restraint; the first ladies in the kingdom stood on chairs and tables, to catch a glimpse of her dark and brilliant physiognomy.”<sup>66</sup>

Madame de Staël’s coming had been heralded about the upper level of the English world of letters for months before her arrival, and so she had little difficulty in becoming acquainted with people whose influence would help to swell the circulation of her book. Maria Edgeworth wrote from London in the spring: “I fear Madame de Staël’s arrival may be put off till after we leave town. The Edinburgh review of her book has well prepared all the world for her.”<sup>67</sup>

Madame de Staël spent most of the summer months in the country, part of the time at Bowood, the seat of Lord Lansdowne. There she came to know several great men in English politics and a few great men of English letters. During the summer she made a firm ally of Samuel Rogers and met, among others, Moore, Southey, George Crabbe, “Monk” Lewis, whom she liked but little, and William Lisle Bowles. George Gordon, Lord Byron, she had already begun to quarrel<sup>s</sup> with.

Her dictum concerning Bowles is amusing: “I see he is only a plain country clergyman without any tact, although a great poet.” But his dictum concerning her is more important for our study, since it gives a hint concerning the nature of her fame among Englishmen in general:

<sup>64</sup> *Considerations on the Principal Events of the French Revolution Posthumous work of the Baroness de Staël, edited by the Duke de Broglie and the Baron de Staël, Translated from the Original Manuscript*, (New York, 1818), II, Book iii, Ch. III, p. 226.

<sup>65</sup> Lady Blennerhasset, *Madame de Staël, Her Friends and Her Influence in Politics and Literature*, (London, 1889), III, 450-451. The biographer quotes from Byron in *Murray’s Magazine*, January, 1887.

<sup>66</sup> *The Students’ Cabinet Library of Useful Tracts*, vol. III. Biographical series, vol. 1, (Edinburgh, 1836). The biography of Madame de Staël by Mrs. Child, p. 62.

<sup>67</sup> Hill, *Maria Edgeworth*, p. 126.

“Madame de Staël made Bowles a speech full of compliments, which he suddenly interrupted with these words: ‘O ma’am, say no more, for I would have done a great deal more to see so great a curiosity.’”<sup>68</sup>

On July 8, Byron wrote to Thomas Moore: “Rogers is out of town with Madame de Staël, who hath published an Essay against Suicide which, I presume, will make somebody shoot himself.”<sup>69</sup> He records with relish five days later a reprimand which he received at the hands of the brilliant baroness: “The Staël last night attacked me furiously—said I had ‘no right to make love’—that I had used XX barbarously—that I had no feeling and was totally insensible to *la belle passion* and had been all my life.”<sup>70</sup> On August 28 he submitted to Moore an important bit of practical advice: “Stick to the East—the oracle, Staël, told me it was the only poetical policy.”<sup>71</sup>

Meanwhile Rogers, who was of the party at Bowood, was enjoying the friendship of a great lady, while she was using him as a decoy to attract to her some of the shy and apparently more interesting poets of England.<sup>72</sup> A letter of Rogers to Tom Moore indicates the way in which Madame de Staël allured people by indirect flattery. On July 28, Rogers wrote in a letter to Moore:

“‘Is Moore arrived?’ said Madame de Staël to me at dinner last week. ‘I have a passion for his poetry.’ She complains that she cannot understand Lord Byron’s but I believe he has not been very attentive to her. Strong feeling delights her most. The death of Clarissa, she says, comes to her constantly as one of the events of her life.” Rogers tells the Irishman that he would like Madame de Staël, who is “very good natured, very lively, and eloquent.” “She speaks English well, but not fluently. Pray come and meet her, and bring Psyche.”<sup>73</sup> And the Irish poet writes to his mother from Mayfield on a Thursday evening of 1813: “I find I am a great favorite with this celebrated Madame de Staël, that has lately arrived, and is making such a noise in London; she says she has a *passion* for my poetry.”<sup>74</sup>

“She is now received by all mankind; but that, indeed, she always was—all womankind, I should say; with distinction and pleasure,” writes Madame d’Arblay, the proper Frances Burney, on August 20, 1813. “I wish much to see her ‘Essay on Suicide,’” continues the novelist of a past age. “When will the work come out for which she was, as she says, *chassée de la France?*” Madame d’Arblay calls Madame de Staël most uncommonly entertaining

<sup>68</sup> Huchon, René, *George Crabbe and his Times*, 1754-1832, translated by F. Clarke, (New York, 1907), p. 391.

<sup>69</sup> *The Works of Lord Byron; Letters and Journals*, ed. R. E. Prothero, (London and New York, 1898), II, 229.

<sup>70</sup> The same, II, 232.

<sup>71</sup> The same, II, 255.

<sup>72</sup> Clayden, P. W., *Rogers and his Contemporaries*, (London, 1889), II, 132, 134, 135.

<sup>73</sup> Moore, Thomas, *Memoirs, Journals, etc.*, VII, 154.

<sup>74</sup> The same, I, 363.

and animating as well as animated almost beyond anybody.<sup>75</sup> And then Madame d'Arblay falls into the popular pitfall when she says, "Les Memoires de Madame de Staël I have read long ago and with singular interest and eagerness."<sup>76</sup>

The baroness was lionized by women as well as men. But she continued to prefer the company of the latter. Of the literary women with whom she associated in England the most important were, after Madame d'Arblay, Miss Edgeworth, the Misses Berry, Mrs. Opie and Mrs. Inchbald. In her book of *Considerations*, Madame de Staël declared there were no British women distinguished for colloquial powers. Of women remarkable as writers she made this list: Miss Edgeworth, Madame d'Arblay, Mrs. Hannah More, Mrs. Inchbald, Mrs. Opie, and Miss Baillie.<sup>77</sup> On June 29, Madame de Staël was a guest at Miss Berry's salon, and the two were together often during the succeeding summer and winter.<sup>78</sup> Miss Berry boasted that she knew Madame de Staël well "with all her faults, ridicules, and littlenesses."<sup>79</sup> Mrs. Opie early became a frequent visitor of Madame de Staël. Toward the end of August she took Mrs. Inchbald to meet the great French lady.<sup>80</sup> The author of the *Simple Story* was much pleased with the treatment she received from the purring lioness:

"I admire Madame de Staël much; she talked to me the whole time; so did Miss Edgeworth whenever I met her in company. These authoresses suppose me dead, and seem to pay a tribute to my memory; but with Madame de Staël it seemed no passing compliment; she was inquisitive as well as attentive, and entreated me to explain the motive why I shunned society?"<sup>81</sup>

In a letter to Miss Edgeworth Mrs. Inchbald suggests the nature of Madame de Staël's purely literary reputation in London, where she was recognized as a mistress of epigram: "and, after all, as Madame de Staël says, 'Good intentions go for nothing in works of wit'—much better in French, 'La bonne intention n'est de rien en fait d'esprit.'"<sup>82</sup>

Madame de Staël was, after all, more at home in the company of men than in that of women. The following dialogue illustrates her peculiar intimacy with Samuel Rogers:

"How sorry I am for Campbell! his poverty so unsettles his mind that he cannot write."

<sup>75</sup> Barret, *Madame d'Arblay*, IV, 210.

<sup>76</sup> See note 57 preceding.

<sup>77</sup> *Considerations*, II, 280.

<sup>78</sup> *Extracts of the Journals of Miss Berry*, II, 536.

<sup>79</sup> The same, III, 13.

<sup>80</sup> Inchbald, Mrs., *Memoirs*, ed. James Boaden, (London, 1833), II, 189.

<sup>81</sup> *Memoirs of Mrs. Inchbald*, II, 190.

<sup>82</sup> The same, II, 195.

“Why does he not take the position of a clerk? He could then compose verses during his leisure hours!”<sup>83</sup>

Madame de Staël’s comment and Rogers’ reply, Rogers himself handed down to posterity. They afford a clear exhibition of the difference in attitude between a Romanticist and a practical Classicist towards a poor poet. In spite of this one approach to a quarrel, Rogers remained in the circle of the society of the great lady until at the beginning of the winter the publication of her *Germany* carried her away on a wave of popularity and whizzed her into the whirlpool of society.

As soon as Sir James Mackintosh returned to England, he became the great satellite of Madame de Staël’s Ptolemaic solar system. In October, Rogers wrote from Bowood to Sarah Rogers that great reënforcements had just come, in the persons of the Romillys, Madame de Staël, and Mackintosh.<sup>84</sup> A month earlier, Mackintosh in his epistolary journal records: “On my return I found the whole fashionable and literary world occupied with Madame de Staël whom [sic] you know was the authoress of *Corinne*, and the most celebrated woman of this or, perhaps, of any age.” After an account of her misfortunes, her exile, and the destruction of the first edition of her book *De l’Allemagne*, the judge mentions complacently *en famille*, “She treats me as the person whom she most delights to honour; I am generally ordered with her to dinner, as one orders beans and bacon; I have, in consequence, dined with her at the houses of almost all of the Cabinet Ministers. She is one of the few persons who surpass expectation; she has every sort of talent and would be universally popular if, in society, she were to confine herself to her inferior talents—pleasantry, anecdote, and literature—which are so much more suited to conversation than her eloquence and genius.”<sup>85</sup>

What the baroness thought of Mackintosh one may guess from this passage of a letter which she wrote to him later in the year:

“We have dined with Ward, but you shone there as the images of Brutus and Cassius; there is no society here without you. Ward was amiable enough, but he preached in the desert.” “It is very irksome to dine without you, and company flags when you are not here. I nevertheless have Sheridan, but in English I have only ideas, not words.”<sup>86</sup>

A careful study of the relation of Sir James Mackintosh to the development of Madame de Staël’s fame in England would probably show that she had almost as much him as herself to thank for that fame. A lawyer of no small note, and an intimate of several men of letters, Sir James was in a position to patronize efficiently a woman whom he admired as he admired Madame de Staël.

<sup>83</sup> *Recollections of the Table Talk of Samuel Rogers to which is added Porsoniana*, (New York, 1856), pp. 250-251.

<sup>84</sup> Clayden, *Rogers and his Contemporaries*, II, 134.

<sup>85</sup> Mackintosh, II, 263-264.

<sup>86</sup> Stevens, Abel, *Madame de Staël, A Study of her Life and Times, the First Revolution and the First Empire*, (New York, 1881), II, 199.

He was, as he said, almost constantly in her company in England. "The month of September was chiefly varied by excursions in the neighborhood, and especially to Madame de Staël's, who had a house at Richmond." He writes again, "24 October to Lord Lansdowne's"—the very visit recorded by Rogers; Mackintosh calls it a "brilliant but rather fatiguing week, with a very distinguished party."<sup>87</sup> And then when Madame de Staël's *Germany* did come out, Mackintosh, who had been praising the lady to all his friends, praised the book in the *Edinburgh Review*. His essay we shall consider later, but his own epistolary comment upon it may well be quoted in this context. He remarks that he had two reviews in the last number of the *Edinburgh*, on Rogers and on Madame de Staël. "They are both, especially the first, thought too panegyrical. I like the praise which I have bestowed on Lord Byron and Thomas Moore. I am convinced of the justness of the praises given to Madame de Staël."<sup>88</sup>

On November 18, 1813, in a letter to William Taylor of Norwich, Robert Southey remarked upon the intimacy of Sir James Mackintosh and Madame de Staël. "I met him at Holland House and at Madame de Staël's. The latter person is the most remarkable and the most interesting of all my new acquaintances."<sup>89</sup> In a letter written to his wife earlier in the autumn, the poet told of a "pleasant dinner at Madame de Staël's," adding "I wish you had seen the animation with which she exclaimed against Davy and Mackintosh for their notions about peace."<sup>90</sup> That the influence of Madame de Staël's sparkling wit upon Southey's dry wit was not temporary only is shown by the fact that one of her brilliant witticisms is recorded at some length in *The Doctor*.<sup>91</sup>

As for the lady, she liked Southey blindly, as she liked all the English poets without reading them. "J'ai été charmée de Mr. Southey;" she wrote to Murray, September 15, 1813, "son âme et son esprit m'ont paru de la même force et dans le même sens."<sup>92</sup>

Southey, who seems to have been impressed by Madame de Staël's conversational powers, took Coleridge on the fourth of October to Madame de Staël's drawing-room "and left him there in the full springtide of his discourse."<sup>93</sup> Soon after this visit, Henry Crabb Robinson, who had in Germany

<sup>87</sup> Mackintosh, II, 266.

<sup>88</sup> Mackintosh, II, 266.

<sup>89</sup> *Memoir of William Taylor*, II, 418.

<sup>90</sup> *Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, (London, 1850), ed. the Revd. Charles. Cuthbert Southey, IV, 45.

<sup>91</sup> *The Doctor*, &c., (London, 1835), III, 83-85: "Madame de Staël could tolerate nothing that was dry except her father."

<sup>92</sup> *A Publisher and his Friends, Memoir and Correspondence of the late John Murray*, (London, 1891), I, 315.

<sup>93</sup> Campbell, James Dykes, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge, A Narrative of the Events of his Life*, (London, 1896), p. 196. The author cites as his source "Letters of Robert Southey," II, 332.

heard Madame de Staël express her admiration for the poetry of Coleridge, asked her what she thought of the man. Her answer was, "He is very great in monologue, but he has no idea of dialogue."<sup>94</sup>

Crabb Robinson it was also who recorded an interesting meeting between the baroness and her fellow-Perfectibilitarian, William Godwin. Oddly enough, the theoretical anarchist who created Caleb Williams did not make upon the sensible lady that favorable impression which most second-rate English authors made. He ought to have been a poet. At a dinner party of liberals, Godwin zealously defended Milton for his submission to Cromwell,—this in opposition to the opinion of his hostess, Madame de Staël, "who was not pleased with the philosopher. She said to Lady Mackintosh after he was gone, 'I am glad I have seen this man—it is curious to see how naturally Jacobins become the advocates of tyrants.'"<sup>95</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Crabb Robinson, I, 314. M. J. Texte, writing for the seventh volume of Petit de Julleville, the fourteenth chapter, *Les relations littéraires de la France avec l'étranger*, mentions three men of letters whom Madame de Staël met in England, Byron, Sheridan, and Coleridge.

<sup>95</sup> Crabb Robinson, I, 419-421.

#### IV

A complete history of the publication and reception of *De l'Allemagne* would fill a volume of no mean proportions. The most that can be attempted within the limits of the present study is some account of the element of human personality involved in the preparations for issuing the book and of the treatment accorded it by various British reviewers.

Madame de Staël came over to England bent upon republishing her treatise *De l'Allemagne*. The great work on Germany, as the reader no doubt has in mind, had been carried once to the very edge of publication and halted there. In 1810, the baroness got her manuscript past the censors and actually had ten thousand copies of the book printed at Lausanne. But the Emperor reversed the decision of his censors, and the Paris police destroyed the condemned volumes. One copy alone and that in manuscript, Madame de Staël saved to bring to England.

Early in the winter of 1812, rumors of Madame de Staël's advent began to circulate in London drawing-rooms. Campbell wrote to her in December, proposing that he be allowed to superintend the translation of her *Germany*.<sup>96</sup> The great lady graciously replied with compliments for *The Pleasures of Hope*, and acceptance of the poet's offer to serve as interpreter. But when the book appeared, it was not Englished by Campbell. And Byron records that Campbell "abused Corinne's book" on one winter evening.<sup>97</sup> In the summer he praised her conversational powers.<sup>98</sup> But he later alluded to her lover, M. Rocca as "the only proof *he* had seen of her good taste."<sup>99</sup>

But where Madame de Staël made one mild enemy she made many warm friends. For one thing, she bent every effort to avoid offending any person of influence in the literary world. She was bound to publish *De l'Allemagne* under favorable auspices. Her first thought was to find a publisher. Therefore, before giving herself up to the pleasures of summer society in the country, she took up her residence at No. 3, George Street, Hanover Square, and set about hunting book-sellers.<sup>100</sup>

The *Gentleman's Magazine* for July had in its Literary Intelligencer a significant paragraph headed, "Speedily will be Published." Madame la Baronne de Staël's interesting work, whose suppression has so long excited the curiosity of Europe is advertised with the cleverness of an inspired press-agent.<sup>101</sup> At the time of the publication of this interesting notice, Madame de

<sup>96</sup> Beattie, *Life of Campbell*, II, 222.

<sup>97</sup> Byron, II, 364.

<sup>98</sup> Campbell, II, 243.

<sup>99</sup> Sanders, Lloyd, *The Holland House Circle*, (New York, 1908), p. 222.

<sup>100</sup> Lady Blennerhasset, *Madame de Staël, her Friends, and her Influence in Politics and Literature*, trans. by J. E. Gordon Cumming, (London, 1889), III, 421. *Living Age*, vol. 126, p. 37, gives No. 30, Argyle Place, Regent Street, which was her winter address.

<sup>101</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 83, n.s. 6, pt. 2, (July, 1813,) p. 40.

Staël was negotiating with Murray in a determined effort to induce him to publish her *Germany* at her terms.<sup>102</sup>

In the same month, a review of Madame de Staël's *Réflexions sur le suicide* appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*.<sup>103</sup> Her good friend Sir James wrote the essay after a scheme which he pretty clearly indicated in a letter to his children in India: "I have reviewed her essay on Suicide in the last *Edinburgh Review*; it is not one of her best, and I have accordingly said more of the author and the subject than of the work."<sup>104</sup> He states in the review that the present publication is chiefly remarkable as an event in the life of the author, and he dilates at length upon the wanderings of Madame de Staël all over Europe as a result of her persecution by Bonaparte.

By the time that the Essay on Suicide was reviewed in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, in the following November, Madame de Staël's vogue was at its height and it was proper to praise her. "Madame de Staël's work may be morally useful," sagely declares the corporeal representative of Mr. Sylvanus Urban. "Madame de Staël treats her subject in a manner equally lively and interesting, placing it in various points of view, and always making her deductions with a brevity and correctness that adds much weight to her comments."<sup>105</sup>

While kindly reviewers were paving the way for her great work, Madame de Staël was busily preparing it for the eyes of the multitudes. Henry Crabb Robinson has left us an account of her arrangements for publication. The following note is in his diary under date of July 11:

"Called this morning on Madame de Staël at 3, George Street, Hanover Square. It is singular that, having in Germany assisted her as a student of philosophy, I should now render her service as a lawyer. Murray the bookseller was with her, and I assisted in drawing up the agreement for her forthcoming work on Germany, for which she is to receive 1500 guineas."<sup>106</sup>

A few further details of Madame de Staël's dealings with her publisher are interesting for the light which they throw upon the opinions which contemporary Englishmen had of her and upon the opinions she had of them. Murray mentions her among the celebrities who occasionally frequented his drawing-room, which was also his office in the morning and his library in the afternoon. Typical of the attitude of William Gifford toward Madame de Staël, as toward other romanticists, is his letter of July 12 to Murray in which he suggests that Murray "take her book, since hope of keeping her from the press is quite vain."<sup>107</sup> A series of notes to John Murray written by Madame de Staël while her book was in the process of being published are of some historical importance in that they show profuse praise

<sup>102</sup> *A Publisher and his Friends*, I, 314.

<sup>103</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, vol. 21, (July, 1813), pp. 424-432.

<sup>104</sup> *Memoirs of Mackintosh*, II, 264.

<sup>105</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 83, pt. 2, (November, 1813), pp. 450-451.

<sup>106</sup> Crabb Robinson's *Diary*, I, 416.

<sup>107</sup> *A Publisher and his Friends*, I, 314.



for some English people and a real liking for others. She sends a thousand thanks for the *Corsair* ("il y a de l'esprit beaucoup et de l'interet") and another "mille remerciements pour la roman de Mlle. Burney."<sup>108</sup> But she orders a complimentary copy of her book for good old Rogers. And she sends with the last of her manuscript for the printer a note beginning with this significant declaration: "Behold the preface,—with corrections of Sir James!"<sup>109</sup>

And so we have brought Madame de Staël to her winter in England and the publication of her book *De l'Allemagne*. The English translation was made by F. Hodgson and edited by William Lamb.<sup>110</sup> The work finally appeared about the last of October. Its coming had been zealously heralded, and it did not lack a royal welcome. The *Gentleman's Magazine* began in November a review borrowed from the *Times*, and continued it in December. William Taylor's long digest of the *Germany* came out in four parts in the December, January, April, and June numbers of the *Monthly Review*. Both the *Quarterly* and the *Edinburgh* reviewed *De l'Allemagne* carefully and at length in the spring of 1814. The essay in the *Edinburgh Review* was an extremely laudatory one from the honeyed pen of Sir James Mackintosh.

Neither the notice in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for November, "Taken from a Review in the *Times* newspaper," nor the continuation of the same which appeared in the December number, contains much that is of importance. The critic, after mentioning his disappointment at finding that the book had been in manuscript for three years and was not about present politics, gave a brief outline of the work, with especial emphasis upon the account of German literature. The fact of the suppression of the earlier edition by the Paris police gave the reviewer a pleasant problem which he solved to his own satisfaction by saying that Madame de Staël's sentiments of admiration for the Germans were such as to imply a still higher admiration for the English; and this, he thought, was a crime which certainly could not be pardoned by the inventor of the Continental System.<sup>111</sup>

In the *Monthly Review*, Mr. William Taylor of Norwich did a considerably more pretentious piece of work than the four-page review borrowed by Mr. Sylvanus Urban of the *Gentleman's Magazine*.<sup>112</sup> Taylor's review of the *Germany* appeared in four sections and filled in all thirty pages. Praising the

<sup>108</sup> The same, p. 315. Of incidental interest in connection with this praise of Fanny Burney is Madame de Staël's contemptuous opinion of the novels of Jane Austen.

"Madame de Staël, to whom he had recommended one of her novels, found no interest in it, and in her note to him in reply said it was 'vulgaire,' and yet, he said, nothing could be more true than what he wrote in answer,—'there is no book which that word would suit so little.'"—*Memoirs of Mackintosh*, II, 471.

<sup>109</sup> *A Publisher and his Friends*, I, 315:

"Voilà la préface, my dear Sir, avec les corrections de Sir James que je vous prie de faire accepter."

<sup>110</sup> *A Publisher and his Friends*, I, 313.

<sup>111</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 83, pt. 2, (November, 1813), pp. 460-461.

<sup>112</sup> *Memoir of Taylor*, II, 440.

great lady, he finds in this later work of the author of *Corinne*, "a maturer judgment and an unfaded fancy." "Her pen moves with the grace of conversation and with the precision of untutored eloquence." Taylor does, however, find the baroness rather too fond of generalizing, of expressing in abstract terms the collective impression of repeated phenomena, and of moralizing when she might depict. For the history of English literature, his most significant comment in the first part of his review is that upon Madame de Staël's distinction between classical and Gothic, or as she in another place used the word, Romantic ideas of perfection.<sup>113</sup>

The second part of the article appeared in the January number of the periodical. Here the reviewer resumes his tune of praise. His only disparaging remark is to the effect that the portion of the work which treats of the social customs and conditions of Germany would have been more naturally and agreeably given in the form of a tour. At the end he says, "Acute, judicious, interesting, and comprehensive in her remarks, she expresses them with a skill even more admirable than her insight."<sup>114</sup>

In April, William Taylor of Norwich in continuing his review gave his readers a hint that the *Germany* was not selling as it should. "The public eagerness of perusal and glow of satisfaction are scarcely commensurable, we are told, with the decided and concurring admiration of the literary critics. Perhaps the English are so accustomed to caustic reviewing that they mistake the absence of censure for the simulation of flattery and suspect a bookseller's puff when an author is not broken on the wheel." Then, after admitting the insular bias of English literary judgments based on moral considerations, he points out that in the third chapter of her book Madame de Staël professes to treat of the principal epochs of German literature, but without displaying much historical or antiquarian research. Taylor, well fitted by his own studies to discuss the subject, gives a clear outline of Madame de Staël's account of the history of German literature. He disagrees with Crabb Robinson as to the justness of her opinion of Goethe, for he says that "Madame de de Staël's seventh chapter, concerning Goëthe [sic] is excellent; it displays the observation which knows how to paint and to judge; and it forms in our opinion the most consummate piece of portraiture that she has executed." The delineation of Schiller he finds more vague, more general, less precise, and less individual than that of Goethe. In this third section, too, as in the first of his review of the *Germany*, Taylor performed the important function of pointing out to English readers Madame de Staël's distinction between Classicism and Romanticism. "The eleventh (chapter) divides European poetry into two schools, the classical, and the romantic. The first originates in the imitation of the ancients, the second, in the progressive amelioration of our native efforts to celebrate our own religion and our own exploits."<sup>115</sup>

<sup>113</sup> *Monthly Review*, ser. 2, vol. 72, (December, 1813), pp. 421-426.

<sup>114</sup> *Monthly Review*, ser. 2, vol. 73, (January, 1814), pp. 63-68.

<sup>115</sup> *Monthly Review*, ser. 2, vol. 73, (April, 1814), pp. 352-365.

On the last page Taylor gives himself a tiny puff: "In appretiating the English translations of Lenore, Mad. de Staël gives the preference to that of Mr. Spencer over that of Mr. William Taylor, Junior."

The last part of this long-drawn-out review appeared in the July number of the *Monthly*. At the beginning of this section, Taylor takes the opportunity to compare English literature with German literature, in two respects unfavorably: "Be it, however, acknowledged that Bürger excels any of our British ballad-makers; and that in 'Tales of Wonder,' German literature is richer than our own." Madame de Staël's comments upon the drama, the critic touches lightly. W. Schlegel he mentions as "an eloquent and eminent writer and lecturer on criticism, to whose appretiations Mad. de Staël is obviously and avowedly indebted." The discussions of philosophical and ethical writers seem to Mr. Taylor to be founded on insufficient study; and theology, he says, is "sippingly tasted." But the review finally ends in a blaze of glorious commendation.<sup>116</sup>

The *Quarterly Review* in its article on the *Germany* made much of the exciting history of the publication of the book. In connection with Madame de Staël's distinction between the genius of the North and that of the South, the writer of the review declares that Madame de Staël's opinion of the native Teutonic taste for the marvelous and romantic is founded in a very accurate knowledge not only of character but of history. He takes the opportunity afforded by the second volume to make remarks of his own concerning the German literati, notably Goethe and Schiller. But like most people who have read the *Germany*, the writer for the *Quarterly* found that after the Second Book, "the shades of dialectic vapor deepen round us with tenfold horror." He did, however, courageously press on so far that he noticed the anomalous subjects which, in Book Four, the baroness classed under the head of religion, among them Enthusiasm. The reviewer points out several faults in Madame de Staël's work: the too general and unmixed character of the praises of German literature; ambition of style, with overfondness for refining and adorning everything; and want of orderly arrangement in her topics. But these he considers petty faults compared with the accuracy of taste, *ardentia verba*, depth of thought, and purity of sentiment.<sup>117</sup>

At a time when other critics praised Madame de Staël highly, one could expect nothing less than panegyric from her good friend Sir James Mackintosh. "The fleeting opportunity of observation has been seized by one of those few persons who are capable at once of observing and painting manners, of estimating and expounding philosophical systems,—of feeling the beauties of the most dissimilar forms of literature,—of tracing peculiarities of usages, arts, and even speculating to their common principle in national character,—and of disposing them in their natural place as features in the great portrait of a people." If Mackintosh is to be believed, the *Germany* abounds in "beautiful" chapters, "most ingenious" theories, "most finished" style, "polite and merciful pleasantry." "The second and most

<sup>116</sup> *Monthly Review*, ser. 2, vol. 74, (July, 1814), pp. 268-275.

<sup>117</sup> *Quarterly Review*, vol. X, (January, 1814), pp. 355-409.

generally amusing as well as the largest part of this work," he writes, "is an animated sketch of the literary history of Germany with criticisms on the most celebrated German poets and poems." While extolling the new book, the faithful friend does not let slip an opportunity to puff an old one, for he remarks that in the philosophy of literary history the great essay of Madame de Staël *On Literature* was the first work attempted on a bold and extensive scale. Certainly if the *Germany* did not sell well the failure was through no lack of praise by Sir James. Like Mr. Simeon Strunsky's tired journalist, we can do no better than quote: "an ardent susceptibility of every disinterested sentiment,—more especially of every social affection,—blended by the power of imagination with a passionate love of the beautiful, the grand, and the good, is, under the name of enthusiasm, the subject of the conclusion, the most eloquent part (if we perhaps except the incomparable chapter on 'Conjugal Love') of a work which, for variety of knowledge, flexibility of power, elevation of view, and comprehension of mind is unequalled among the works of women; and which, in the union of the graces of society and literature with the genius of philosophy, is not surpassed by many among those of men."

Yet even Mackintosh found some faults in the *Germany*. He notes the obvious objection that the Germans are too much lauded, adding, however, that the objection is more apparent than real. The biggest defect that he sees in Madame la Baronne's masterpiece is that the eye is dazzled by unvaried brilliancy. He grants, too, that there may be here and there in the *Germany* some vagueness of statement, but he declares that the critics, men of greater intellect than susceptibility, who accuse Madame de Staël of using vague language in expression of sentiment, unjustly charge defects to that deep, moral, and poetical sensibility with which they are unable to sympathize.<sup>118</sup>

In Scotland as in England, *De l'Allemagne* gained immediate recognition. The *Scots Magazine* praised the book highly in December, 1813, though the reviewer found an explanation for the cloudiness of the author's discussion of German metaphysics in her ignorance of the Scotch philosophers. He lauds especially her power of delineating the impressions made on feeling and elevated minds by the grand objects of nature and the arts. "She paints these objects finely, but she paints still more finely the emotions which they excite." So says the Scotch critic, and he declares also that *Corinne* is the most charming of all Madame de Staël's works, nay, more, that *because* the *Germany* has no romantic heroine it lacks the charm of its predecessor.<sup>119</sup>

Hazlitt's *Madame de Staël's Account of German Philosophy and Literature*, an essay which appeared in two sections in the *Morning Chronicle* of February

<sup>118</sup> *The Miscellaneous Works of the Right Honourable Sir James Mackintosh*, (New York, 1866), pp. 260-270, Review of Madame de Staël's *De l'Allemagne* from the *Edinburgh Review*, vol. 22, (January, 1814), p. 368 ff.

<sup>119</sup> *The Scots Magazine and Edinburgh Literary Miscellany*, vol. 75, (Edinburgh, 1813), pp. 920-932.

3 and February 17, 1814, may be considered a review of *De l'Allemagne*. In this article, however, which fills seven pages of his collected works, Hazlitt uses the baroness' book "as a point of departure only." He writes a few words of conventional approval of Madame de Staël's "very ingenious and elegant work on Germany," points out the importance of the view which she takes of German poetry as contrasted with French poetry, and states that neither the *Edinburgh* reviewer nor any other has given a satisfactory abstract of the Frenchwoman's account of German philosophy. Then he dives into the midst of Kant's theories, with especial emphasis upon the "'sublime restriction' (as Madame de Staël expresses it)—nihil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu."<sup>120</sup>

One more extended review of the *Germany* remains to be considered, that which appeared in the *British Critic*, the organ of the Church of England, in the summer of 1814. The critic begins with a happy comparison of Madame de Staël and Tacitus. He gives a hint of the old attitude toward Madame de Staël when he says, "For ourselves, we own that we did not sit down without considerable prejudice and caution, to read a publication by the author of *Delphine*." To his pleased surprise, however, he discovered that the lady's intentions in the present work were honest and good. Another significant passage suggests a reason for the *British Critic's* tolerant attitude toward the new treatise:

"It is not the detection of a few imperfections which can lead us to view with regret, or to welcome with indifference, a work 'so undeniably recommended' by the enmity of Buonaparte. There is to be found in it, we allow, something to offend the taste, and something also to baffle the comprehension of a plain sober-minded Englishman, who naturally dislikes the least appearance of rant or exaggeration, and is not disposed to identify the superficial with the clear, the mystic with the profound, and the extravagant with the sublime."<sup>121</sup>

In the second part of his review, the critic repeats his earlier criticisms in different words, remarks that the author is "excessive in her encomiums on the German writers," and expresses a fear that her religious position is not orthodox. This sentence expresses the critic's opinion of Madame de Staël's style:

"Nay, there are places where soon after reminding us of the grandest part of Burke, she recalls to our memory the existence of another figure in Rhetoric vulgarly called *nonsense*."<sup>122</sup>

<sup>120</sup> *The Collected Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. A. R. Waller and Arnold Glover with an introduction by W. E. Henley, (London, 1902), vol. XI, Fugitive Writings, pp. 162-166.

<sup>121</sup> *British Critic*, new series; for Jan.-June, 1814, vol. I (May, 1814), pp. 504-528.

<sup>122</sup> The same, pp. 639-659.

The *Germany* was published early in November, 1813. Thirty-five hundred copies were sold within six weeks.<sup>123</sup> But in spite of the praise the sales fell off rapidly, so that Murray's profits were far from being as large as he hoped they would be.<sup>124</sup> No doubt Henry Crabb Robinson thought he knew the secret of the unpopularity of the book.

<sup>123</sup> Mackintosh, II, 266; a letter written December 24th.

<sup>124</sup> Murray, I, 317.

Crabb Robinson, like Taylor of Norwich, was a student of German literature. When the *Germany* came to him hot off the press he read it within a few days and then went around, on November 15, to see the lady and compliment her on her book, and incidentally to point out a few of her mistakes. In his journal he blandly tells the story of his call upon Madame de Staël, "to whom I said some civil things about her book, which she received with less than an author's usual self-complacence; but she manifested no readiness to correct some palpable omissions and mistakes I pointed out to her. . . . She confessed that in her selection of books to notice she was guided by A. W. Schlegel. . . . This confession was not necessary for me."<sup>125</sup> "She says," Robinson adds incidentally, "she is about to write a book on the French Revolution and on the state of England."<sup>126</sup>

Madame de Staël was immensely popular socially. One mention of her activity in society appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, a statement that she was among those present at the Lord Mayor's banquet in January of 1814.<sup>127</sup> People liked to hear, if they did not like to read in large quantities, her sparkling epigrams. Careful gossips have recorded remarks concerning her made by various inconspicuous people whose opinions may fairly be taken as typically those of London society. Somebody dug up some years since for *Notes and Queries* a letter written, he said, by a late M. P. in 1813. Since the M. P. declares that last winter there were two lionesses—Miss Edgeworth first, and then Madame de Staël, we may infer that he had lost a year somewhere, for Madame de Staël spent the winter of 1812-1813 in Russia. His next remarks however, seems significant: "The rage has now a little abated." "This extraordinary woman," says the M. P., ". . . and who that has felt 'Corinne' and 'Delphine' can help thinking her extraordinary?—is not so ugly as I expected from the accounts we have heard. Her eyes are extremely good, her mouth bad, but she is one of the people who improve with age. She appears extremely good-natured, careless of the society of ladies and openly showing her dislike of it, and thinking Sir J. Mackintosh the most agreeable man in England."<sup>128</sup>

A biographer of Maria Edgeworth has gathered conveniently judgements passed upon Madame de Staël by a number of people not qualified to judge. Miss Catherine Fanshaw, for instance, described in immoderate terms the pleasures of an evening in company with, among others, Lord Byron and Madame de Staël, the latter of whom Miss Fanshaw characterized as "the latest imported lion." "Had the whole discourse been written without one

<sup>125</sup> Crabb Robinson, I, 422.

<sup>126</sup> The *Considerations on the French Revolution*.

<sup>127</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 84, (February, 1814), p. 405.

<sup>128</sup> *Notes and Queries*, 5th series, I, (1874), 326.

syllable of correction," declares the sensible young lady, "it would be difficult to name a dialogue so full of eloquence and wit. Eloquence is a great word, but not too big for her."<sup>129</sup>

The same biographer has recorded the Duke of Wellington's well-known observation, that Madame de Staël "was a most agreeable woman if you only kept her light and away from politics."<sup>130</sup> Dr. Bollman called her an extraordinary woman in all that she did.<sup>131</sup> Miss Edgeworth herself wrote many words of commendation for the author of *Corinne*.

Sir Henry Holland mentioned in his diary in 1814 the fact that Madame de Staël had flattered him with her attention at a large assembly. "I was led to believe," he continues, "that she would willingly surrender something of her intellectual fame for a little more of personal beauty."<sup>13</sup>

J. W. Croker set down in 1825 some interesting impressions of Madame de Staël. After an account of his first meeting with her at a dinner at Lord Liverpool's country place in Coombe Wood, when she and Mackintosh got lost on the muddy road and were two hours late, Croker proceeds to this description:

"She was ugly, and not of an intellectual ugliness. Her features were coarse, and the ordinary expression rather vulgar, she had an ugly mouth, and one or two irregularly prominent teeth, which perhaps gave her countenance an habitual gaiety. Her eye was full, dark, and expressive; and when she declaimed, which was almost whenever she spoke, she looked eloquent, and one forgot that she was plain. On the whole, she was singularly unfeminine, and if in conversation one forgot she was ugly, one forgot also that she was a woman." One supplementary sentence will complete this characterization of Madame de Staël as British society saw her: "During dinner she talked incessantly but admirably, but several of her apparently spontaneous *mots* were borrowed or prepared."<sup>133</sup>

Byron, the individualist, had much in common with Madame de Staël. In the summer of 1813 they became acquainted, and in the following year they were, we may infer, affectionate friends, for they said villainously mean things about each other when their backs were turned. In his diary, in January, 1821, Byron recorded at some length his memories of the winter of 1814. "I had been the lion of 1812; Miss Edgeworth and Madame de Staël, with the 'Cossack' toward the end of 1813, were the exhibitions of the succeeding year."<sup>134</sup> Of Madame de Staël he says: "She was always more civil to

<sup>129</sup> *Maria Edgeworth and her Circle*, p. 128.

<sup>130</sup> The same, p. 130.

<sup>131</sup> The same, p. 131.

<sup>132</sup> *London Quarterly Review*, vol. 132, (January-April, 1872), Art. VII—Sir Henry Holland's Recollections.

<sup>133</sup> *The Croker Papers, The Correspondence and Diaries of the Late Right Honourable John Wilson Croker*, ed. Louis J. Jennings, (New York, 1884), I, 300-302.

<sup>134</sup> Byron, V, 178.



me in person than during my absence."<sup>135</sup> She did tell "Monk" Lewis that Byron was (as who can doubt ?) affected.<sup>136</sup> At another time she asked Lady Melbourne whether Byron had really any *bonhomie*. "She might as well have asked that question," writes Byron in his journal, "before she told C. L. [Caroline Lamb?] 'C'est un démon.'" <sup>137</sup> Of Byron's light slanders of Madame de Staël, I append a few specimens. To Miss Milbanke he wrote in November, 1813: "It is lucky that Mad. de Staël has published her antisuicide at so killing a time—November too! I have not read it for fear the love of contradiction might lead me to a practical confutation. Do you know her? I don't ask if you have heard her. Her tongue is the perpetual motion."<sup>138</sup> To John Murray he wrote in the same month, "I am trying whether De l'Allemagne will act as an opiate, but I doubt it."<sup>139</sup> Another sample: "I admire her abilities, but really her society is overwhelming."<sup>140</sup> There are other notable passages of ill-tempered remark about Madame de Staël, among them the oft-quoted assertion of Lord Byron that she stayed so long at table talking after dinner that the gentlemen "wished her in—the drawing-room."<sup>141</sup>

Nevertheless, Madame de Staël and Lord Byron were, as he wrote on December 10, 1813, "very good friends." The baroness declared that she would have been willing to be as unhappy as Lady Byron if she could also have inspired in her husband poems such as Lord Byron made for his wife.<sup>142</sup> She flattered the noble young poet by comparing him to Rousseau. And he borrowed from her, rather than from Goethe as some critics have thought, the first line of *The Bride of Abydos*.<sup>143</sup> In the notes to the same poem, Byron paid the baroness a handsome compliment, pointing out that he had found the comparison of architecture to frozen music<sup>144</sup> "in the latest work of the first female writer of this, perhaps of any age."<sup>145</sup> She sent him her gratitude in the first of many billets that went from her establishment to his in the course of the winter. "Her works," he wrote soon after, "are my delight, and so is she herself, for half an hour.—But she is a woman by herself and has done more than all the rest of them together intellectually."<sup>146</sup>

<sup>135</sup> The same, V, 213.

<sup>136</sup> Byron, II, 379. Byron tells of Lewis' squabbling with Madame "about himself, Clarissa Harlowe, Mackintosh, and me."

<sup>137</sup> The same, II, 372.

<sup>138</sup> The same, III, 408.

<sup>139</sup> The same, II, 290.

<sup>140</sup> The same, II, 384.

<sup>141</sup> The same, II, 392.

<sup>142</sup> Estève, Edmond, *Byron et le romantisme français Essai sur le fortune et l'influence de l'oeuvre de Byron en France de 1812 à 1850*, (Paris, 1907), p. 54.

<sup>143</sup> Byron, II, 304, Note 2.

<sup>144</sup> The same, II, 304, Note. See also *A Journal of Conversations with Lord Byron* by the Countess of Blessington with a sketch of the Life of the Author, (Boston, 1859), pp. 310-311.

<sup>145</sup> The expression is from Schelling's *Methodology*, declares Crabb Robinson, (I, 179).

<sup>146</sup> Byron II, 355.

During the winter, Byron found opportunity for much fuming in the fact that Murray, who had offered him two thousand guineas for the two poems, *The Bride of Abydos* and *The Giaour*, told Madame de Staël that he had actually paid the poet that sum.<sup>147</sup> Byron, who was in Madame de Staël's company much until she left England in the summer of 1814, and continued on good terms with her all her life, had many other interesting statements to make concerning her. But the tale of the relations between Byron and Madame de Staël is really "another story," and for the purposes of the present survey it is enough to repeat that the two great people were friends.

One other Englishman whom Madame de Staël heartily liked was as different as possible from Lord Byron, William Wilberforce. She thought him the man most respected and esteemed in all England,<sup>148</sup> and in her preface to the translation of one of his pamphlets on the treatment of the Negroes she eulogized him as "orateur distingué dans la chambre des communes, remarquablement instruit sur tout ce que tient à la littérature et à cette haute philosophie dont la religion est la base."<sup>149</sup> Wilberforce seems to have admired her and he mentions with pride her presence at one of his anti-slavery meetings.<sup>150</sup>

Canning, who had years before in the *Anti-Jacobin* anonymously abused Madame de Staël's reputation, fell in line and praised the *Germany*. "I can now say," he wrote to Murray, "that I have read enough of Mad. de Staël to be highly pleased and instructed by her. The second volume delights me particularly."<sup>151</sup>

Lord Brougham experienced a similar change of opinion. In his case, however, the change was more rapid and more pronounced; for that reason his attitude may fairly be taken as typical of that of the conservative part of English society. How he felt in June, 1813, is shown pretty clearly by this passage from a letter which he wrote on the 29th: "Talking of horrors reminds me of the lioness, von Staël. I think I shall be obliged to say that, being a person who fears God and honors the king, I am afraid to come near her. To say the truth, if anything could keep me more out of society than I am at this season, it would be her prowling about. I was asked t'other day to go whereshe was, and had thoughts of returning the same answer with the man in Aesop's Fables, that 'he could not come, there being a lion in the way.'" <sup>152</sup> Yet he afterwards called her "the most celebrated woman in modern times, perhaps in some particulars the most remarkable of her sex that has appeared in any age." He says in addition, "It is, however, as an illustrious member of the republic of letters that she claims the highest place, and as such that she has the clearest right to the respect of posterity." Indeed

<sup>147</sup> Byron, II, 295 and others.

<sup>148</sup> *Considerations on the French Revolution*, II, 235.

<sup>149</sup> *Oeuvres inédites de Mme. la Baronne de Staël*, (Paris, 1821), III, 309.

<sup>150</sup> Stevens, *Madame de Staël*, II, 201.

<sup>151</sup> Byron, II, 286, Note 1.

<sup>152</sup> *The Life and Times of Henry Lord Brougham written by himself*, (New York, 1871), II, 137.

Lord Brougham discovered in Madame de Staël one virtue that some of her other friends never suspected: "Thoroughly honest, however, and hating affectation in all its forms, she could never pretend to what she did not feel, though at the risk of having a defect in her taste exposed."<sup>153</sup>

Although Brougham praised Madame de Staël, Bentham liked her not. Noted for his straightforward manner, the great political scientist was especially rude to the daughter of Necker. Her sentimentalities and flatteries he thoroughly abhorred, and he called her a trumpery magpie. When Dumont, who by the way was a friend of Madame de Staël,<sup>154</sup> told him that she had said that upon coming to England she would see nobody till she had seen Bentham, Bentham said the lady would, then, see nobody.<sup>155</sup> "Once when Madame de Staël actually called on him, expressing an earnest desire for an audience, he sent to tell her that he certainly had nothing to say to her, and he could not see the necessity of an interview for anything she had to say to him."<sup>156</sup>

On the other hand, even the Reverend Sydney Smith, who wrote the violent denunciation of *Delphine* for the *Edinburgh* in 1803, was brought if not into subjection at least into neutrality by her social charms in the winter of 1813-1814. Of the *Edinburgh* notice of her book, he wrote to Mr. John Allen on January 13, 1814: "I hear great complaints of Mackintosh's review of Madame de Staël as too laudatory. Of this I cannot judge, as I have not read the original; but the review itself is very splendid."<sup>157</sup> Perhaps the moderation of his opinions concerning the tactful lady was owing, in part at least, to the fact recorded by one of his biographers that "his conversational powers excited the admiration of the brilliant Madame de Staël."<sup>158</sup>

But in spite of her personal magic and her earnest supporters, Madame de Staël failed to win the confidence of the Wizard of the North. Scott thought as other critics have thought since, that the merit of her work was largely superficial. Nor had he any liking for brilliant Parisian conversationalists. He left record of his judgment in a letter written in December, at the height of *Corinne's* London glory: "All Edinburgh have been on tiptoe to see Madame de Staël, but she is not likely to honour us with a visit, at which I cannot prevail on myself to be very sorry; for as I tired of some of her works, I am afraid I should disgrace my taste by tiring of the authoress too."<sup>159</sup>

Despite her personal popularity, her great book did not go unchallenged by little rivals. In July, 1814, the world was warned of the approaching publi-

<sup>153</sup> *Works of Henry Lord Brougham*, (Edinburgh, 1872), V, 132, 137.

<sup>154</sup> Murray, I, 314, etc.

<sup>155</sup> Bowring, John, *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, (Edinburgh, 1818); (Volumes X and XI contain the Memoirs of Bentham), X, 467.

<sup>156</sup> The same, XI, 79.

<sup>157</sup> *A Memoir of the Reverend Sydney Smith by his daughter Lady Holland with a selection of his letters edited by Mrs. Austen*, Fourth ed., (London, 1855), II, 113.

<sup>158</sup> Reid, S. J., *The Life and Times of Sydney Smith*, (London, 1846), p. 13.

<sup>159</sup> Lockhart, J. G., *The Life of Sir Walter Scott*, (Edinburgh, 1902), IV, 123.

cation of an "Analysis of Madame de Staël's work on Germany."<sup>160</sup> And in April, 1815, the *Monthly Review* noticed briefly two replies to *De l'Allemagne*, one "Remarks on Mad. de Staël's Work on Germany, in Four Letters, addressed to Sir James Mackintosh, Knt. M. P." the other, a "critical Analysis of several incongruous passages in Mad. de Staël's Work on Germany." The comment of the reviewer, who advises burning the third volume of the *Germany* because such chapters as the one "De l'amour dans le mariage" seem to him to extenuate adultery, represents fairly the popular opinion which kept the *Germany* from selling well. The second attacking volume is of some note because it was written, a hundred years ago, by a German who thought that a friend of Germany, a woman who was introducing German culture to the world, had not done justice to his native country.<sup>161</sup>

A letter written by Madame d'Arbly to Mrs. Lecke and Mrs. Augerstein in December, 1815, two years after the publication of *Germany*, illustrates the attitude of the typical English reader toward Madame de Staël's book. Madame d'Arbly tells of the pleasure, the transport rather, with which she reads nearly every phrase of the *Germany*, in which she is then advanced only about one-third of the first volume! "Such acuteness of thought, such vivacity of ideas, and such brilliancy of expression, I know not where I have met before. I often lay the book down to enjoy for a considerable time a single sentence. I have rarely, even in the course of my whole life, read anything with so glowing a fulness of applause."<sup>162</sup> With this round of orthodox acclamation the tabulation of evidence concerning the immediate history of Madame de Staël's *Germany* among her English contemporaries may well end.

Madame de Staël did, however, stay in England till late in the spring of 1814 to enjoy the full social value of her success.<sup>162</sup> She continued to be popular in society on the strength of her literary reputation even though the "Dandies" quizzed her, and Lord Holland laughed at her *Germany*.<sup>163</sup> Only a few men disliked her, and most of them were persons like Curran,<sup>164</sup> for whom the adulation of her preliminary flattery cooled rapidly upon acquaintance. Late in the spring, her first successful book, *Letters on the Writings and Character of Rousseau*, was republished in England, as the *New Monthly Magazine* recorded in its List of New Publications in May.<sup>165</sup> A postscript

<sup>160</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 84, pt. 2, (July, 1814), p. 32.

<sup>161</sup> *Monthly Review*, ser. 2, vol. 76, (April, 1815), pp. 443-444.

<sup>162</sup> Madame d'Arbly, IV, 376.

<sup>163</sup> The exact date of her departure is uncertain. M. Pierre Kohler, who relies for most of his information about Madame de Staël's visit to England upon the *souvenirs* of Jean-Louis Mallet, a native of Geneva who was living in London in 1813, says that it was May 8, 1814. *Madame de Staël et la Suisse, étude biographique et littéraire avec de nombreux documents inédits*, p. 630.

<sup>164</sup> Byron, II, 326.

<sup>165</sup> Curran, W. H., *The Life of the Right Honourable John Philpot Curran*, (Edinburgh, 1822), II, 342.

<sup>166</sup> *New Monthly Magazine*, vol. I, (May, 1814), p. 458.

from a letter written by Byron to Rogers in June illustrates the way in which Madame de Staël spent the evenings of her triumph: "The Staël outtalked Whitbread, overwhelmed his spouse, was ironed by Sheridan, confounded Sir Humphry, and utterly perplexed your slave."<sup>166</sup> So she reigned in glory during the early months of 1814, though news of the death of her son in a German duel saddened her in the springtime.<sup>167</sup> August found her again at Coppet, where she was soon entertaining the admiring, letter-writing poet Rogers.<sup>168</sup>

She did not stay long in Switzerland, but soon passed on to her beloved Paris. Crabb Robinson was in her company there in the last week of September and the first of October. He notes characteristically: "Constant and Schlegel praised highly the 'Dichtung und Wahrheit,' which our hostess does not like—how should she?"<sup>169</sup> Thomas Campbell was also a guest of Madame de Staël in September.<sup>170</sup> Sir James Mackintosh, too, visited her at Paris. Several interesting entries in his journal remain for the curious eyes of scholarship: "Madame de Staël fell foul of me for my desire of pleasing everybody, and for my too frequent appearance in the character of 'Mr. Harmony.' " When Mackintosh makes polite amends after a dispute, the baroness says, "This is Scotland polished at Paris."<sup>171</sup>

Her English reputation did not die immediately upon her leaving England. She continued to be a live subject for comment in the reviews until the day of her death, and indeed, for some years thereafter. We find her name twice mentioned in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1814 after her departure from Britain, once in a brief comment concerning her advocacy of the abolition of the slave trade,<sup>172</sup> and again in a single paragraph in an article about the *Anti-Jacobin*, a paragraph remarking that in that periodical she was abused in a tone of downright obscenity, and concluding, "Nowadays the lady is all but divine."<sup>173</sup>

Tweddell's *Life and Remains* appeared in 1815 and was reviewed in October in both the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*. One noteworthy passage both reviewers quoted, the characterization of Madame de Staël:

"Mad. de Staël is a most surprising personage; she has more wit than any man or woman I ever saw. She is plain, and has no good features but

<sup>166</sup> Byron, III, 91.

<sup>167</sup> *Memoirs of Mrs. Inchbald*, II, 190. The account begins: "I will now mention the calamity of a neighbour, by many degrees the first female writer in the world, as she is called by the Edinburgh Reviewers."

<sup>168</sup> *Rogers and his Contemporaries*, II, 162, 164.

<sup>169</sup> Crabb Robinson, I, 452, 453.

<sup>170</sup> Beattie, *Life of Thomas Campbell*, II, 257, 262.

<sup>171</sup> Mackintosh, II, 324.

<sup>172</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, vol. 24, (November, 1814), p. 112.

<sup>173</sup> The same, p. 185; see also Byron, II, 223. Byron speaks of "Staël the Epicene" in allusion to the passage quoted over Note 31 preceding.

her eyes, and yet she continues, by her astonishing power of speech, to talk herself into the possession of a figure that is not disagreeable."<sup>174</sup>

The *British Critic* reviewed in the winter of 1815 a volume of *Memoirs of the War of the French in Spain*, by M. de Rocca. "M. de Rocca is a Genevese, and well known on the continent by his connection with Madame de Staël, to whom he has been some time married." The reviewer notes an interesting passage in which Napoleon is credited with saying in one of his celebrated conversations at Elba that he was surprised that the censors of the press should have found anything worthy of suppression in Madame de Staël's work on Germany, which he read for the first time during his exile.<sup>175</sup>

Another indication of Madame de Staël's relation to English literature is afforded by a letter of Madame de Staël to Lady Mackintosh:

"J'ai été bien reconnoissante d'une preuve de vôtre souvenir. Souvent j'ai dit à Sir James qu'un de mes châteaux en Espagne serait, que Sir James, imitant le sage exemple de Gibbon, vînt s'établir avec vous sur les bords du Lac de Genève pour terminer son histoire. Que pensez-vous de ce projet? Sir James est un peu incertain de sa nature, et je ne crois point à son histoire, si vous n'êtes pas le pouvoir exécutif de cette entreprise."<sup>176</sup>

Hazlitt's second mention of Madame de Staël occurs in his *Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity* which appeared in the *Examiner*, December 10, 1815. This time he simply quotes with commendation her address to Germany, "Allemagne, tu es une nation, et tu pleurs!"<sup>177</sup> Two months later in the *Edinburgh* in a review of Schlegel on the Drama, Hazlitt mentioned Madame de Staël's indebtedness to Schlegel.<sup>178</sup>

In the same number of the *Edinburgh Review*, the writer of an article on Ancient German and Northern Poetry had a few words to say of Madame de Staël's "superficial notice" of the *Nibelungen Lied*.<sup>179</sup> This is the last appearance of Madame de Staël's name in the *Edinburgh* till after her death. In the *Gentleman's Magazine* for March, 1816, in a letter *On the Present Mode of Female Education*, a writer presents as a translation of German morality "from a late Work, the celebrated Madame de Staël's Germany," a passage about love as a romantic religion.<sup>180</sup> And in the same volume is a note of the marriage of the "Prince of Broglie" to the grand-daughter of M. Necker, Mademoiselle de Staël.<sup>181</sup>

There were crowds of celebrities in Madame de Staël's salon in the winter of 1816-1817 "and from England such a multitude that it seemed like a

<sup>174</sup> *Remains of the Late John Tweddell*, (London, 1815), pp. 117, 118; quoted, *Edinburgh Review*, vol. 25, (October, 1815), and *Quarterly Review*, vol. 14, (October, 1815).

<sup>175</sup> *British Critic*, vol. IV, (July-December, 1815), pp. 471, 472.

<sup>176</sup> Mackintosh, II, 327.

<sup>177</sup> Hazlitt's *Works*, XI, Fugitive Writings, p. 282.

<sup>178</sup> The same, X, 79; another comment on p. 119.

<sup>179</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, vol. 26, (February, 1816), p. 186.

<sup>180</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 86, (March, 1816), p. 227.

<sup>181</sup> The same, p. 370; the "Prince" was the Duc de Broglie.

general migration of British talent and rank."<sup>182</sup> Among the chance visitors was the influential Mr. Canning, and Madame Necker de Saussure in her biographical notice gives a bright account of the exchange of repartee between Madame de Staël and her old enemy.<sup>183</sup>

Early in 1816, Madame de Staël began negotiations, through her son, with Murray for the publication of that book on the Revolution which, as Crabb Robinson recorded, she projected while she was still in England. The work, now referred to as *Des Causes et des effets de la Révolution française*, she wanted four thousand pounds for, besides a credit in books for every new edition. Murray offered a much smaller sum for the first edition, with three hundred and fifty pounds for each future edition. The details of the negotiation are of little interest except for the contention of Murray, already referred to, that the proceeds from sale of the *Germany* were disappointingly small.<sup>184</sup> Byron wrote Murray a letter in 1817 urging him to close with the baroness for this book which, the poet says, "will be her best work and permanently historical."<sup>185</sup> The *Considerations* were not published till after her death.

A passage from Rogers' diary shows what Madame de Staël's English friends actually thought of her, after the fashionable craze had passed: "'Corinne' by far Madame de Staël's best novel. 'Delphine' falls off terribly. Her 'Allemagne' very fatiguing. She writes her works four or five times over, correcting them only in that way. The end of a chapter always the most obscure, as she always ends with an epigram."<sup>186</sup>

Byron continued to be Madame de Staël's sincere friend, although he continued also to make disparaging remarks concerning her. He showed something very like gratitude. In writing of the ladies whom he knew in London at the time of his separation from his wife, he said: "Of all that coterie, Madame [de Staël] after [Lady Jersey] was the best; at least I thought so, for these two ladies were the only ones who ventured to protect me when all London was crying out against me on the separation, and *they* behaved courageously and kindly."<sup>187</sup> In Byron's Journals and Letters is evidence that in 1816, when he and Madame de Staël were neighbors in Switzerland, the good lady renewed her friendship by attempting to effect for the poet a reconciliation with his wife.<sup>187</sup>

In Lord Byron's intercourse with Madame de Staël and her household, the speculative investigator might well find evidence of interchange of literary influence. Byron, for example, borrowed from her the works of "Mr.

<sup>182</sup> Stevens, *Madame de Staël*, II, 349.

<sup>183</sup> *Notice*, p. cccvii.

<sup>184</sup> Murray, I, 316-317.

<sup>185</sup> Byron, IV, 94. He adds: "I like your delicacy—you who print Margaret and Ildemim and then demur at Corinne."

<sup>186</sup> Clayden, I, 224-225.

<sup>187</sup> Byron, III, 343, 383; IV, 95, and others.

Schlegel."<sup>188</sup> Again, in a letter to Murray, September 30, 1816, Byron wrote: "Madame de Staël wishes to see the 'Antiquary,' and I am going to take it to her tomorrow. She has made Copet as agreeable as society and talent can make any place on earth."<sup>189</sup>

Yet Lord Byron's peevish irritation at Madame de Staël's frankness continued, especially at her frankness in talking about him to their friends in common. "Monk Lewis assures me that at Florence the said Mme. de Staël was *open-mouthed* against me; and when asked in Switzerland why she had changed her opinion replied, with laudable sincerity, that I had named her in a sonnet with Voltaire, Rousseau, etc., and that she could not help it through decency."<sup>190</sup> The sonnet, of course, was the Sonnet to Lake Lemán, written in July, 1816. It was probably through Byron that the baroness came to know Shelley; the poet of *Alastor* seems, however, to have been little impressed by the great lady.<sup>191</sup> Madame de Staël seems also to have tried to reform Byron, as this passage in his *Reply to Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* suggests: "I recollect Madame de Staël said to me in Switzerland, 'You should not have warred with the world—it will not do—it is too strong always for any individual; I myself once tried it in early life, but it will not do.'"<sup>192</sup> Perhaps it was with this end, of reformation, in view, that Madame de Staël roused Byron's interest in Lady Caroline Lamb's unconventional autobiographical novel, *Glenarvon*, in which Byron himself is supposed to be one character, and then lent him it to read.<sup>193</sup>

The *New Monthly Magazine* published the last contemporary mention of Madame de Staël in an English periodical. In the Cabinet of Varieties in the number for June, 1817, are recorded several anecdotes of her, all borrowed from "a foreign periodical work." The most interesting of the bits of gossip is this: "It has been reported that she was to undertake the conduct of the *Mercure de France* in association with Benjamin Constant and other experienced writers."<sup>194</sup> One of the last Englishmen to see Madame de Staël on earth was Lord Brougham who wrote from London on October 20, "Saw Madame de Staël the day before I left Paris, quite well."<sup>195</sup>

<sup>188</sup> The same, III, 343 and Note 2. The book referred to was probably the edition of the Lectures in English translation, *A Course of Lectures in Dramatic Art and Literature*, (1815).

<sup>189</sup> Byron, III, 369.

<sup>190</sup> Byron, V, 213; Letter to T. Moore, 1821.

<sup>191</sup> Richter, Helene, *Percy Bysshe Shelley*, (Weimar, 1898), p. 479.

<sup>192</sup> Byron, IV, Appendix X, p. 480.

<sup>193</sup> The same, II, 338; IV, 11.

<sup>194</sup> *New Monthly Magazine*, vol. 7, (June, 1817), 421-422.

<sup>195</sup> *The Life and Times of Henry Lord Brougham*, (New York, 1871), II, 252.



## VI

On the 14th of July, 1817, Madame la Baronne de Staël-Holstein died at Coppet. The *Gentleman's Magazine* for that month published an obituary which consisted for the most part of quotations. First the editor quotes from an unfavorable characterization beginning, "Madame de Staël possessed a high rank in the literary world; but she seemed more remarkable for felicity of wit and sprightliness of fancy, than purity of taste and correctness of judgement." Her house in London, the adverse critic adds, became "the centre of attraction for all the literary idlers of the capital." For fairness' sake, however, opinions more laudatory are repeated from the sketch of Madame de Staël in Lady Morgan's *France*. In political matters, we are told, Madame de Staël proceeded in the magnificent march of genius governed by principle. She was, in Lady Morgan's opinion, "one of the most distinguished women of her age; from whose works," says the Irishwoman, "I have received infinite pleasure, and (as a woman, I may add) infinite pride." "Among those who knew her well, the splendour of her reputation seems sunk in the popularity of her character."<sup>196</sup> To the present writer, the sentence just quoted, seems particularly significant, for to a large extent the splendor of her reputation was not only sunk in but actually founded upon her personal popularity.

A sketch of the life of Madame de Staël was published in the *European Magazine* in August, 1817. There is little of interest and practically nothing of importance for literary history in the ill-considered little essay. The scribe evidently wrote at top speed till his allotted space was filled and then stopped short, regardless of the fact that he had barely got the great woman of letters to the year of the publication of her greatest work. The scandals of her salad days he hints at rather cheerfully. The early vicissitudes of her political career are discussed at some length. The reader is told casually, toward the close of the piece, that Madame de Staël twice visited England. We are pleased to learn that on the occasion of her first sojourn "she resided in a small Gothic house at Richmond, which is visible from the river above the bridge." There may be some significance in the fact that the critic considered the baroness' works so well known that he need not bother to enumerate them. One gladly notes, too, that the "Mercure probably recorded the latest of her opinions and the last tracings of her prolific pen."<sup>197</sup>

In the same month, the *Gentleman's Magazine* had three articles about Madame de Staël, one concerning the unusual size of her head, as observed at the autopsy,<sup>198</sup> one, the "between wit and beauty and possessing neither" anecdote of the rude gentleman who sat between Madame de Staël and Madame Récamier,<sup>198</sup> one, an abusive obituary borrowed from the *Day* newspaper,

<sup>196</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 87, pt. 2, (July, 1817), pp. 85-86.

<sup>197</sup> *The European Magazine and London Review*, vol. 72, (July-December, 1817), pp. 141-144.

<sup>198</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 87, pt. 2, (August, 1817), p. 170.

which had in turn borrowed it, without acknowledgement, from the *Literary Gazette*.<sup>199</sup> The sneering little biographical sketch has one interesting comment upon the *Germany*, that the book "has provoked some controversy."<sup>200</sup>

In August also, the *New Monthly Magazine* published a short memoir. Here too is some harsh criticism. She spoke little but in aphorisms with the evident intention to produce effect; the journalistic biographer thinks so because D. Boileau, who gets no credit for the idea, thought the same thing and said so in the preface to his translation of *De la littérature*. Probably D. Boileau got the opinion from reading Gibbon. In the obituary notice, however, there is praise as well as blame. *Corinna*, for instance, is considered the most splendid monument of the taste, erudition, lively sensibility, and ardent imagination of its author. (Incidentally one may notice that the hasty essayist made a mistake of two years in Madame de Staël's age.) After quoting from a Paris paper's eulogy of her the writer of the memoir qualifies the praise with objections on moral grounds.<sup>201</sup>

Byron, who was in Venice at the time of Madame de Staël's death, expressed his personal sorrow in a letter to Murray. He gave support to the rumor, as did also J. W. Ward, that she had become reconciled to the Church of Rome, or, as Byron put it, "had died a Papist."<sup>202</sup> "In a general point of view," wrote Byron, "she will leave a great gap in society and literature." And yet the mourning poet wrote for Murray a long, humorous rhymed obituary of the lady. It began:

"They're at this moment in discussion  
On poor de Staël's late dissolution.  
Her book, they say, was in advance—  
Pray Heaven! she tell the truth of France."

And it ended:

"But peace be with her! for a woman  
Her talents surely were uncommon.  
Her Publisher (and Public too)  
The hour of her demise may rue—  
For never more within his shop he—  
Pray—was not she interred at Coppet?"<sup>203</sup>

Her sudden death was, of course, the signal for a revival of interest in her work. In November, 1817, the new review, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* published the only piece of her composition that appeared in an English periodical (unless she composed one of the puffs for the *Germany*). *Upon the Proper Manner and Usefulness of Translations* is the essay, one that had appeared about a year before in an Italian journal. The only interesting bit of criticism is in an editorial footnote. Madame de Staël declares that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* must have been created "by one master spirit." "Just

<sup>199</sup> The same, pp. 179-182.

<sup>200</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 87, pt. 2, (October, 1817), p. 328.

<sup>201</sup> *New Monthly Magazine*, vol. 8, (August, 1817), pp. 58-63.

<sup>202</sup> Byron, IV, 156.

<sup>203</sup> The same, IV, 161.

what might have been expected from a believer in Ossian," says the Scotch reviewer.<sup>204</sup>

In the *New Monthly Magazine* for April, 1818, were printed a few critical remarks concerning a recent English edition of Madame de Staël's *Memoirs of the Private Life of My Father*. The book is said to have a moral value and, the critic continues, must in spite of natural exaggeration be "considered as having its basis in truth."<sup>205</sup>

Madame de Staël's posthumous *Considérations sur les principaux événements de la révolution française*, were published by Baldwin and Cradock in London in 1818, and roused some critical discussion in England.<sup>206</sup> Three reviews of the work appeared within six months. Two passages from the book itself will illustrate her judgements of England. The first is amusing in its partiality to critics who had been kind to her works. The second shows contemporary judgement of the poets of the "Romantic Triumph."

"Literary criticism is carried to the highest pitch in the Reviews, particularly in that of Edinburgh; in which writers, formed to render themselves illustrious, Jeffrey, Playfair, Mackintosh, do not disdain to enlighten authors by the opinions they pass on their works."<sup>207</sup>

"A second age of poetry has arisen in England, because enthusiasm is not there extinct, and because nature, love, and country, always exercise great power there. Cowper lately, and now Rogers, Moore, Thomas Campbell, Walter Scott, Lord Byron, in different departments and degrees, are preparing a new age of glory for English poetry."<sup>208</sup>

The most important British review of the *Considérations* was, of course, Jeffrey's essay in the *Edinburgh Review* for September, 1818. "The work is," says Jeffrey, "the dying bequest of the most brilliant writer that has appeared in our days, the most powerful writer that her country has produced since the time of Voltaire and Rousseau, and the greatest writer, of a woman, that any time or any country has produced." Yet Madame de Staël has defects which Jeffrey points out. Taste not quite pure, style too irregular and ambitious, passion for effect, and the tone of exaggeration which that passion naturally produces have probably interfered occasionally with the soundness of her judgment. She gives her history in abstracts, and her theories in aphorisms. The greater part of her works may be fairly described as a collection of striking fragments. Jeffrey praises highly her eloquence on all subjects, but disagrees with some of her opinions. She over-rates the importance of literature and is too confident in her theory of perfectibility. She makes passions and high sensibilities a good deal too indispensable for

<sup>204</sup> *Blackwood's New Edinburgh Magazine*, vol. 2 (November, 1817, reprinted in London, 1818), pp. 145-149.

<sup>205</sup> *New Monthly Magazine*, vol. 9, (January-June, 1818), p. 244.

<sup>206</sup> Murray, I, 318.

<sup>207</sup> *Considerations on the Principal Events of the French Revolution* (New York, 1818), vol. II, bk. III, chap. V, p. 263.

<sup>208</sup> The same, p. 264.

the happiness and wisdom of private life. Jeffrey praises though he cannot share her political optimism, and he approves the spirit and temper of impartiality in her work on the Revolution, though he declares that she lacks the perspective necessary for an historian to integrate historical facts. In her unfavorable criticism of the manners of English society, he can perceive traces rather of ingenious theory than of correct observation. After passing judgment upon the book in detail, Lord Jeffrey ends his essay with the assertion that of the merits of the book "the half would be sufficient to justify us in ascribing to its lamented author that perfection of masculine understanding, and female grace and acuteness, which are so rarely to be met with apart, and never, we believe, were before united."<sup>209</sup>

After Jeffrey's wonderful essay, the laudatory review which appeared in the same month in *Blackwood's* seems trivial and cheap. Madame de Staël's sudden death has, the reviewer says, taken one of its brightest ornaments from the literature of Europe. In commenting upon her cosmopolitan fame, the critic suggests a possible reason for the partiality of English readers for her writings, in the praise of England which they contain. This woman, "Femina pectore, vir ingenio," has, it seems, embodied in her book "more good observation and practical sense, in regard to the events of the revolutionary period than we have elsewhere met with." After a laudatory chronological glance at her works, with even a note of commendation for the "power and purpose of 'Delphine,'" the writer quotes largely from her encomiums of the English, with such introductory remarks as this: "Nothing, we think, can be more delightful than such praise from such lips, we shall make room for another passage." And then the critique ends, and we "close the work with increased admiration for her talents—with greatly increased regret that she should have been cut off at a period of life when the direction of her talents had begun to be more strictly useful than ever."<sup>210</sup>

The *Monthly Review* of January, 1819, had a brief notice of the *Memoirs of the Private Life of My Father*, the same edition which had been reviewed favorably in the *New Monthly Magazine* ten months before. The *Monthly Reviewer* points out that the work is an old book under a new name, a publication "got up on the spur of the moment to satisfy the public curiosity awakened by the notice of the death of Madame de Staël."<sup>211</sup>

In the same month and the month following, the third review of the *Considerations on the Principal Events of the French Revolution* came forth, a long article in the *Monthly Review*. The essay is for the most part a résumé. Beyond the remark that there are "new views to be found in her reflections," there is little of personal comment. The critic points out some defects of style and logic. Her language, he says, is often inflated, and her arguments are sometimes badly urged. The review is on the whole a piece of hacked

<sup>209</sup> Jeffrey, *Contributions to the Edinburgh Review*, II, 55-103.

<sup>210</sup> *Blackwood's*, vol. 3, (September, 1818), pp. 633-648.

<sup>211</sup> *Monthly Review*, ser. 2, vol. 88, (January, 1819), pp. 104-105.

patchwork, with only one interesting observation, that the book places in a striking light the activity and importance of women in France.<sup>212</sup>

In *Blackwood's*, a magazine of a new sort, we find something different from the heavy essays of the reviews and the dry news-items of the old *Gentleman's Magazine*. Under the general title, "The Chateau of Coppet," *Blackwood's* published in November and December, 1818, three short familiar letters, written supposedly by a French lady who had been a friend of "Corinne" for twenty-five years. Pleasantly panegyric in their tone, they treat of Madame de Staël's early life, of her histrionic talent and her play *The Shunamite*, of her esteem for England and things and persons English, especially Lord Byron. "It was natural that the most distinguished female of our age should desire to know the only poet who has found the poetic muse in our day." The last letter ends conveniently with an account of her funeral.<sup>213</sup>

In England, after her death, her fame lived chiefly in the work of five men, Byron, Mackintosh, William Taylor, Carlyle, and the omnipotent Jeffrey, although minor figures contributed bits towards the support of her reputation. In the Countess of Blessington's journal of conversations with Lord Byron are recorded many interesting statements of his concerning Madame de Staël. This general characterization, for instance, is from that gossipy source:

"Madame de Staël was very eloquent when her imagination warmed, (and a very little excited it); her powers of imagination were much stronger than her reasoning ones, perhaps owing to their being much more frequently exercised; her language was recondite, but redundant; and though always flowery, and often brilliant, there was an obscurity that left the impression that she did not perfectly understand what she endeavored to render intelligible to others. She was always losing herself in philosophical disquisition, and once she got entangled in the mazes of the labyrinth of metaphysics, she had no clue by which she could guide her path—the imagination that led her into her difficulties could not get her out of them; the want of a mathematical education, which might have served as a ballast to steady and help her into the port of reason, was always visible, and though she had great tact in concealing her defeat, and covering a retreat, a tolerable logician must have always discovered the scrapes she got into."<sup>214</sup>

In Byron's reminiscences, too, and in letters of his to Moore and Murray, Madame de Staël's name often appears. In a letter to Murray about the dedication of *Marino Faliero* to Goethe, Byron quotes "Corinne's" assertion that Werther has occasioned more suicides than the most beautiful woman.<sup>215</sup> In the course of his controversy with Bowles, Byron declared that there was

<sup>212</sup> *Monthly Review*, vol. 88, (January, February, 1819), pp. 1-16, 138-154.

<sup>213</sup> *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, vol. 4, (November, December, 1818), pp. 198-199, 199-201, 277-279.

<sup>214</sup> Blessington, *A Journal of Conversations with Lord Byron*, (Boston, 1859), p. 58.

more licentiousness in a single French prose novel than in all the poetry that ever was penned, and added, "The sentimental anatomy of Rousseau and Made. de Staël are far more formidable than any quantity of verse."<sup>216</sup> Again in 1822 he wrote to Murray practically the same opinion concerning "the immaculate De Staël."<sup>217</sup> In letters to the Earl and the Countess of Blessington, Byron made interesting reference to his association with Madame de Staël; he told of her showing him B. Constant's *Adolphe*, and of his giving the Countess Guiccioli Madame de Staël's book on the Revolution.<sup>218</sup> *Corinne*, too, he set the Italian beauty to reading, and he wrote her a wonderful love-letter on its flyleaf.<sup>219</sup>

Mackintosh in his old age told many stories about her, anecdotes illustrating her clever wit, remarks of other people about her, such as that of Lord Dudley, who said that she was not a good neighbor—there could be no slumbering near her or she would instantly detect you. Mackintosh was astonished to hear that M. Thiers called her writings the perfection of mediocrity. "Madame de Staël's penetration," Sir James declared, "was certainly extraordinary."<sup>220</sup>

In April, 1820, a long review of Madame Necker de Saussure's *Notice sur le caractère et les écrits de Madame de Staël* was published in the *British Critic*. The chief defect of the work is said to be its "constant tone of praise." "We well remember, during her last visit to England, when she was the idol of the London circles, offences against the established rules of society were eagerly quoted against her by some, who could never pardon her intellectual superiority." The anecdote concerning Canning's rebuke for boasting of the victory of England over France is repeated, and her literary indebtedness to Lord Byron is strongly hinted. The reviewer thinks she gave a remarkable proof of her perspicacity "by writing in 1795, that France must pass under a military despotism before she could arrive at a mixed monarchy." He speaks highly of the *Germany*: "Mme. Necker put *L'Allemagne* on a level with *Corinne*; we think it decidedly superior: the chef d'oeuvre of Madame de Staël and the triumph of female literature." But the *British Critic* still has his doubts about the spiritual situation of Madame de Staël. "She speaks like a child on subjects connected with religion," he regretfully announces. And he says in conclusion that her life "teaches us that the gifts of sensibility and the imagination are dangerous for our fallen state."<sup>221</sup>

For the *Monthly Review*, William Taylor of Norwich wrote in 1820 a long essay on Madame de Staël, making it a review of the French and English

<sup>216</sup> Byron, V, 102.

<sup>216</sup> The same, V, 582; also Blessington, p. 62, where there is an account of Byron's making the accusation to Madame de Staël herself.

<sup>217</sup> Byron, VI, 156.

<sup>218</sup> Byron, VI, 188, 204.

<sup>219</sup> The same, IV, 350, 749.

<sup>220</sup> Mackintosh, II, 434-435, 474.

<sup>221</sup> *British Critic*, vol. 13, (January-June, 1820), pp. 367-394.

versions of Madame Necker de Saussure's *Sketch of the Life, Character, and Writings of Baroness de Staël-Holstein* and also of a gift-book called *Treasures of Thought from Madame de Staël-Holstein*. Madame de Staël, asserts William Taylor, stands at the head not merely of female authors but of influential women because she is the acknowledged interpreter of the average will, or common sense, of the thinking world. Her writings form, after all, but a subordinate part of her merit. She was the medium for popularizing opinions which might have been born and preserved without her. It was she, says Taylor, who made *liberalism* the substitute for *chivalry*.<sup>222</sup>

Taylor reviewed Necker's works twice in 1822-1823. And he commented upon Madame de Staël's *Ten Years of Exile and Dramatic Works* in the *Monthly Review* in 1824, making the notable assertion that she lacked the dramatic instinct.<sup>223</sup> But Taylor's one important criticism after 1820 was his review, in 1822, of Madame Necker de Saussure's edition of "Corinne's" complete works. His characterization of the early publications need not detain us long. He finds "delicacy of appreciation" in the *Rousseau*, lack of consistent reasoning in the *Influence of the Passions*, and some "false criticism" in the essay *On Literature*. In *Delphine*, he says, Madame de Staël painted her own moral character, and in *Corinne* her intellectual portrait. William Taylor praises the author's taste and condones her lack of logic in the *Germany* and asserts that this is "certainly the most brilliant and most beautifully written of all the productions of the author."<sup>224</sup>

Thomas Carlyle, although, strictly speaking, a contemporary was not influenced by her work on Germany till after her death. According to one biographer, Carlyle wrote in 1819 the article on her for the *Edinburgh Encyclopedia*.<sup>225</sup> Certainly he knew her book well. Froude mentions a slight essay on Madame de Staël as written in 1830,<sup>226</sup> perhaps the introductory note to the translation of Jean Paul Richter's *Review of Madame de Staël's 'Allemagne.'* In the single paragraph, Carlyle gives indication of his own indebtedness to the *Germany* when he calls that book, "the work which with all its vagueness and manifold shortcomings, must be regarded as the precursor, if not the parent, of whatever acquaintance with German literature exists among us."<sup>227</sup> In 1832, in the essay on *Schiller, Goethe and Madame de Staël*, Carlyle again expressed appreciation of the indebtedness of English readers for her work on Germany. One sentence of this essay might have served as a text and starting-point for the present study: "Of Madame in London there are some sketches in Byron's Letters, but more in

<sup>222</sup> *Monthly Review*, ser. 2, vol. 92, (July, 1820), pp. 243-255.

<sup>223</sup> *Monthly Review*, vol. 102, (July, 1824), pp. 256-264.

<sup>224</sup> *Monthly Review*, ser. 2, vol. 97, (June, 1822), pp. 533-540.

<sup>225</sup> Craig, R. S., *The Making of Carlyle*, (New York, 1909), p. 118.

<sup>226</sup> Froude, J. A., *Thomas Carlyle A History of the First Forty Years of his Life 1795-1835*, (New York, 1882), II, 81.

<sup>227</sup> Carlyle, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, (New York, 1864), II, 455-482.

the way of daubing than of painting, done too, not with philosophic permanent colours, but with mere dandyic ochre and japan, which last were but indifferently applied here."<sup>228</sup>

In the *Edinburgh Review* for November, 1822, in an essay on L. Simond's *Switzerland*, appears a remarkable characterization of Madame de Staël. Her admiration for the society of Paris was, the writer thinks, a genuine admiration for herself. It was the best mirror she could get. She was ambitious of all sorts of notoriety. In speaking, she gave herself up to the present enjoyment\*of good things from her own mind.<sup>229</sup>

Various British contemporaries of Madame de Staël made interesting comments about her soon after her death. Maria Edgeworth wrote from Coppet in 1820: "There is something inexpressibly melancholy, awful, in this house, in these rooms, where the thought continually occurs, here Genius was here was ambition, Love! all the great struggles of the passions; here was Madame de Staël!"<sup>230</sup>

Hazlitt several times quoted Madame de Staël, and once, in Round Table, No. 24, *On the Character of Rousseau*, took occasion to express a violent dissent from her opinions.<sup>231</sup> Tom Moore referred to her as "the inimitable author of 'Corinne'" in his essay on French novels which was published in the *Edinburgh Review*, November, 1820.<sup>232</sup> Again in 1831, he referred to her in print, this time in less laudatory terms. In his essay on German Rationalism, he said that Rationalism glimmered doubtfully through the bright mist of the *Allemagne*.<sup>233</sup> Lord Macaulay left a slight record of his opinion of her in his essay on Madame d'Arblay which appeared in the *Edinburgh* in January, 1843. In writing of Miss Burney's association with the émigrés in Surrey, he declared: "The most animated eloquence, the keenest observation, the most sparkling wit, the most courtly grace, were united to charm her. For Madame de Staël was there, and M. de Talleyrand."<sup>234</sup>

Professor John Wilson, "Christopher North," in *Noctes Ambrosianae* says through the throat of his Shepherd that Madame de Staël was "a fine speerit, and her name will be enrolled, on account of her rare and surpassing genius, often nobly employed, among the great benefactors of the specie." "Agreed!" said North.<sup>235</sup>

One great essay remains to be considered, Jeffrey's review of the Complete Works of Madame de Staël in 1828. Here, in the *Edinburgh Review* for

<sup>228</sup> The same, III, 424-434.

<sup>229</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, (November, 1822), p. 469.

<sup>230</sup> Maria Edgeworth, p. 267.

<sup>231</sup> Hazlitt, *Works*, I, 88. See also: V, 363.

<sup>232</sup> Moore, Thomas, *Prose and Verse Hitherto Unedited and Uncollected*, (London, 1878), p. 78.

<sup>233</sup> The same, pp. 197-198.

<sup>234</sup> *The Miscellaneous Works of Lord Macaulay*, ed. Lady Trevelyan, XVI, pp. 55-56.

<sup>235</sup> Professor Wilson, *Works*, ed. Ferrier (Edinburgh, 1855), *Noctes Ambrosianae*, I, 270; see also p. 268.



December, we find the judgment of a thinker who has been near the object of speculation but now reviews it in a better perspective; his decision is one upon which the ordinary man may put reliance. Jeffrey, although he comments unfavorably upon the tone of Madame Necker de Saussure's panegyric biography, praises the character of Madame de Staël. Yet he disagrees with the assertion that she ought to be considered the founder of a new school of literature and philosophy. Her genius co-operated, no doubt, with the spirit of the times, and assisted its effects, but it was also acted upon, and in part created, by that spirit. Her works are rather the first fruits of a new order of things that had already struck root in Europe, than harbinger of changes that still remain to be effected. "And her works will remain not only as a brilliant memorial of her own unrivalled genius, but as a proof that sound and comprehensive views were entertained, kind affections cultivated, and elegant pursuits followed out through a period which posterity will be apt to regard as one of universal delirium and crime;—that the principles of genuine freedom, taste, and morality, were not altogether extinct, even under the reign of terror and violence—and that one who lived through the whole of that agitating scene, was the first luminously to explain, and temperately and powerfully to express, the great moral and political lessons which it should have taught to mankind."<sup>236</sup>

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A survey of the literary career of Madame de Staël in England shows that the artistic excellence of her writings had remarkably little influence upon the growth of her fame. Before the publication of *Delphine*, she sold few books in England, not because her early publications were poor books, but because she had lovers, and associated with revolutionists. *Delphine* was rather widely read, and was condemned as immoral. *Corinne* was the one work to win favorable recognition in Great Britain almost purely on its artistic merits. Madame de Staël's friends among reviewers and poets and people of fashion, and her enemy, Napoleon, gave her a large part of the tremendous prestige which she came to have in England as the author of *Germany*. The treatise itself found comparatively few careful readers. Even at the time of its publication, however, critics began to perceive the historical value of the work, and especially of its author's distinction between Romantic and Classic literatures. After her year of triumph, nevertheless, "Corinne's" fame diminished gradually till her death; then it revived, more moderate and more firmly established upon logical consideration of the quality and import of her works of literary art. Jeffrey, in the impressive essay which closes and summarizes the tale of Madame de Staël's literary reputation in the England of her day, clearly defined her permanent position as not the creator but the incarnation of the intellectual phase of Romanticism.

\* <sup>236</sup> Jeffrey, *Contributions to the Edinburgh Review*, IV. 487-500.

## APPENDIX A

Three pieces of documentary evidence concerning Madame de Staël's relation to the English people it seems wise to mention here, though they have little bearing upon her literary reputation in the British Isles. Two of the three are reviews of political rather than literary significance, one of the *Corinne* and the other of the *Appeal to the Nations of Europe*. The third is a letter from Madame de Staël to a British general.

The *Satirist, or Monthly Meteor* for November, 1807, contained a review of *Corinne*. The one sentence of interest as literary criticism is this: "In many important points of superiority, indeed, her volumes rank far above ordinary performances of a similar intention; for though by the construction of an ingenious fable she has dedicated her book to the elegant and the gay, the moral philosopher will applaud the accurate succession of feelings with which the passion of love is conducted through all its gradations." But the critic observes that "an admiration of the English character was evidently the impulse to the present composition." And the true keynote of the article is sounded in the concluding sentence of partisan appeal: "Having thus endeavored, by a just representation of her claim, to obtain for this elegant authoress the notice of the public, we shall not be transgressing the province of our office, when we recommend her to the favour of the patriot."<sup>1</sup>

A political notice of Madame de Staël's political pamphlet, *An Appeal to the Nations of Europe*, appeared in the *Anti-Jacobin Review* in 1812.<sup>2</sup>

The third item to be considered in this appendix is a letter from Madame de Staël to Sir Robert Wilson, for my copy of which I am deeply indebted to the courteous kindness of Miss F. C. Johnson of London. This little note (B. M. Addit. MS. 30, 106. f. 368), came to the attention of one of Madame de Staël's most voluminous biographers, Lady Blennerhassett, who quoted one sentence of it.<sup>3</sup> I have been at some pains to prove that this letter can not possibly have any bearing upon Madame de Staël's literary reputation in England,<sup>4</sup> but for fear that some scholar may think otherwise, it seems well to reprint the text here:

STOCKHOLM ce 12  
décembre, 1812

je remets avec plaisir à votre aide de camp my dear sir un mot qui vs rappelle combien je vs aime et vs admire—toutes les nations vs ont donné l'ordre de la bravoure moi je vs donne tout ce dont je puis disposer la plus haute estime et l'intérêt le plus sincère—il me semble que les russes ont triomphé à cause de vous—tachez qu'il en soit de même de la délivrance de l'europe—et ménagez vous pour conserver l'exemple de la plus parfaite union de l'esprit de chevalerie et de l'amour de la liberté—quand nous reverrons nous? donnez-moi de vos nouvelles, et comtez à jamais sur

moi—

NECKER DE STAËL HOLSTEIN

<sup>1</sup> *The Satirist, or Monthly Meteor*, (London, 1808), I, 199-201, 308-310.

<sup>2</sup> For this piece of information, I am indebted to my friend, Mr. C. A. Carroll.

<sup>3</sup> *Frau von Staël, ihre Freunde und ihre Bedeutung in Politik und Literatur*, von Lady Blennerhassett, geb. gräfin Leyden, (Berlin, 1889), III, 343.

<sup>4</sup> *Two Notes of Madame de Staël, Modern Philology*, November, 1916, XIV, 423-428.

## APPENDIX B

A list of books from which may be derived further knowledge concerning the life of Madame de Staël:

- I. Staël-Holstein, Anne Louise Germaine Necker.
  - A. *Oeuvres complètes*; publiées par son fils, (Paris, 1820-21), 17 v.  
(The first volume includes Madame Necker de Saussure's very important biographical *Notice sur le caractère et les écrits de Mme. de Staël.*)
  - B. *Oeuvres inédites*; pub. par son fils, (Paris, 1821). 3 v.
  - C. *Essai sur les fictions* (1795) mit Goethe's übersetzung (1796) hrsg. von J. Imelmann, (Berlin, 1896).
- II. Biographers:
  - A. Blennerhassett, Charlotte Julia, (geb. gräfin Leyden), Lady.  
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